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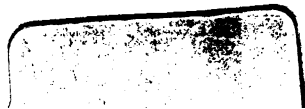
# IN CLAY AND IN BRONZE

BRINSLEY MACNAMARA

~~Fiction (English)~~

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**IN CLAY AND IN BRONZE**





# IN CLAY AND IN BRONZE

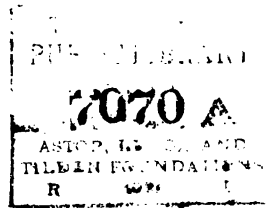
A STUDY IN PERSONALITY 7

BY  
BRINSLEY MACNAMARA



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## BOOK I.—THE PEASANT



# IN CLAY AND IN BRONZE

## BOOK I

### THE PEASANT

#### I

**T**HE gloom of the March evening was beginning to creep in over the land as Martin Duignan unyoked his horses from the plough and, coming out through a narrow gap where the mud slushed up about his boots, entered the long breen which led to his mother's house. He walked with head downcast like the horses who pounded along doggedly, the dirty hair of their fetlocks falling down over their clay-encrusted hoofs. The two horses and the man were beating a broken retreat before the forces of the Earth. This was the life of the horses and the life of him who had to work like a horse—their sudden, brave effort of the morning, the long furrows and the sun in their faces and the rise of the hill. Then the ending—to stumble home like this when the night was falling down and creeping in over Glannanea.

Yet upon this very evening it might be that there was some kind of a dream shining in the mind of Martin Duignan. There seemed to be something in him that the clay had not yet subdued and it came thus to life when the labour of the fields was done. As he took his way so quietly now by the old churchyard of Glannanea a little shudder passed through his frame. He could



never forget when as a boy he had passed there after the great storm of 1903 and seen where even the graves of the dead had been broken, for the fallen trees had uprooted the yellow skulls of some long dead kinsmen, and that near by a frightened ewe had died in giving birth to her two lambs. . . The place had always looked so lonely in the fading light. He was past the age when the tales of old cronies could have effect and make him suddenly fearful, but for him there had always lingered something of terror in the aspect of the tombstones. For often, while he was in the fields, the chapel bell of Glannidan would ring out and a little later down this way he would see the poor coffin borne. . . It was the funeral of some old man whose existence people had scarcely noticed, some ancient, maybe, who had died as he leaned upon his stick looking into the forge fire of an evening. . . At such times and as now a passage from a poem would come into his mind:

"Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

It was something he remembered clearly from his scanty schooldays. That and Goldsmith's poem of *The Deserted Village*. Sometimes he would see the churchyard of Glannanea enlarged beyond the little stir of beauty the lines of the poem would cause in his mind. Then a curious regret and a dumb longing to know more would come to him, and he would pause, whether at his labour in the fields or on his way home down the boreen, to wonder, the horses looking at him pityingly with their big eyes. . .

Now after a few lapses of this kind Martin came

into the wide untidy yard before the long, low thatched house where he lived with his mother and sister. Mary Duignan came out of the house to look proudly upon her horses. It was not every woman in the townland who could say she was mistress of two horses, although it was only quite recently that they had been able to purchase the second. She was a fine woman, remarkable with pride in the possession of land. This was how she would strike one as she came out of her own house, her bosom great before her in the twilight. . .

From beneath her apron she took a bottle of holy water with which it was her evident intention to besprinkle the horses' drink and feed and bedding, so that they might remain alive and strong to labour on the morrow. This was a precaution taken in the hope of averting a calamity which sometimes happened in the townland of Glannanea, a scourge which sometimes came and swept away a man's cattle and horses and sheep. Many years before a curse had been put upon the place by a holy priest who was here scandalised and silenced. It seemed a very terrible thing that the poor, dumb, patient beasts should be made to suffer from generation to generation for something that had once been said about a holy man to satisfy the hunger of lying tongues. It was a great punishment. The death of one of their Christian selves did not appear half so terrible since their inherent belief in their own holiness vouchsafed eternal glory to the dear departed. But the death of one of their beasts smote them with a sickening, awful feeling of loss. It was an event which denied them even the satisfaction of a certain mournful, morbid pride that was the constant comfort of hearing the priest reading out during the interval at Mass—

"Your prayers are requested for the repose of the soul of —." There was something which always stirred them in the public announcement of the deceased's name. And there might also be the accompanying satisfaction of bragging about the cost of the solid, brass-mounted coffin or the amount of whiskey that the mourners had drunk at the wake. . . Even nothing like this as the outcome of the curse, but just the dead beast in the field or stable with the dew of death upon its eyes and a few men muttering something about "the will of God." The digging of the grave in a lonely quarter of the bit of land and the journey to Glannidan for a sup of drink to help them forget. . . Later the thick, enclosing gloom as they sat in some dark corner of the widow Kelly's pub, drinking a pint or two while people were whispering all round:

"The poor, unfortunate crew, sure they're after burying their grand mare this evening, bad luck to the lie in it."

In the light of all this it did not seem strange that Mary Duignan should be anxious about her horses. She was troubled by a double annoyance now since they had purchased the second. . . She bent down and felt their hard, sinewy forelegs in turn; then rising drew her hand alternately along their sweaty, shiny flanks.

"The poor things!" she said.

Martin felt hurt. The horses were more to his mother than her only son. . . Such moments were frequent in his life. They reached his flicker of emotion always as he passed the churchyard of Glannanea and seemed to tell that there existed in his breast some subtle quality which separated him from the clay. And yet

how very obediently he had taken to the land upon the death of his father? He had been doing the will of the household since he was sixteen, ploughing, mucking daily in the clay, tending cattle, mowing, tramping to distant fairs. They had prospered as a result of his industry. Yet he had stood in a somewhat different relation to life. His father, Arthur Duignan, had had a certain amount of enlightenment beyond his station. When in his cups, which was often, he would speak of the fine future he had planned for his boy, Martin, of education and position and the fine life of cities . . . and, after all, this was the result of that ambition and just now his life had narrowed down, a smattering of National Education that was of no use to him even as a farmer, the eternal clay and his poor life in a thatched house with crooked walls and little windows near the village of Glannidan.

His head was bent low over his plate as he went on with the half cold supper of potatoes and milk he had taken from the ashes. There was little attendance or consideration for him in this house. But his attention was now all for the meal before him. He must be just like the horses, he thought, who were now rapidly munching their hay while his own mother patted their necks and whispered affectionately into their ears. . . . At last she came in.

"Is Brigid in Glannidan this evening?" he inquired, without lifting his head.

"She is then."

"She's getting to be damnable flighty, that one."

"Musha sure she only went for a few wants. She'll be back in no time for she brought the bicycle."

"Aye, the bicycle!"

"Aye, indeed!"

"A bicycle and fine dresses and an accent, I thank ye, when she meets some jackeen in Glannidan. But what about me, mother dear? I'm only able to show myself there after dark. But I'm not much of a character don't ye know? Brigid, of course, is a great beauty and has to be abroad in the daylight."

"Well, and sure hasn't a poor girl to make the most of herself just like a man? Sure you make the most of yourself out there in the fields!"

"Aye!"

"You're a hard son, Martin. Just as your father was a hard husband. A very reckless man who spent the most of his time in the widow Kelly's. Ah, dear-a-dear, sure he left little provision for any of us, only the bit of land. Your poor little sister that looks so elegant when she's dressed up. God only knows but it's to Austin Fagan, the Clerk of the Union, she'll be getting married to yet, your little sister."

"My little sister! I'm thinking of my end of the story."

"Well, give her her fortune and she won't be bothering you here."

"And where would I get a fortune for her in the name of God?"

"Now if you were to get married, Martin! I'm sure you'd be well able to command a fine gerrl with a nice penny, and not a lassie like Lucy Flynn, the one you do be after."

"You're a smart woman, mother." . . .

It was only after such a talk with his mother that Martin began to feel the dumb stirrings of his own will and a kind of craving flow into his heart

and brain. Such were times when he felt some touch of another ability, something that already raised him beyond the tillers of the soil. . .

This diversion of his thought was interrupted by the entry of Brigid. She came into the smoky kitchen wheeling her bright bicycle and a look of disdain sped across her face as she observed the loutish figure of Martin, sitting there with his head bowed upon his bent arm, as he began to brood so sullenly upon the purpose of his life. She had just been speaking with Austin Fagan and the immediate sense of contrast between her brother and the Clerk of the Union was still present in her mind.

Austin Fagan was a constant figure of admiration in Glannidan. He was before all else a ladies' man, a fellow who wore kid gloves, smoked expensive cigarettes and patronized dogs and horses. He was vastly contemptuous of such as Martin Duignan. He spoke with a sneer of their corduroy breeches, although they paid the rates out of which he was paid. Often in the long, heavy period of the day a motor bicycle would dash down the road from Glannidan and fervent curses would rise out of the fields.

"There's Austin Fagan; the curse of hell on him! He must have a quare laugh at the likes of us working like this to make a gentleman of the likes of him!"

And one night Martin had seen him giggling with Brian Doyle, the reporter for the *Ballycullen Gazette* outside Whelehan's public house. They were looking over a packet of postcards. Just a short while before Martin had seen them talking to his sister Brigid a little way up the street. . . As the two grand young men passed off into the dusk still grinning, Martin

saw that one of the postcards had slipped from the packet and looked filthy there upon the lamplit gutter of the street. He picked it up and remained a long time gazing upon it. . .

Just now his mother came rushing down from the bedroom where she had gone to speak a word to Brigid. She appeared excited.

"D'ye know what, Martin? Brigid is after being invited to the St. Patrick's night dance in Glannidan by no less than two young men!"

"Begad!"

"By William Moore and Austin Fagan. Of course you know William is the makings of a great match for any girl. His ould father is rotten with money. But me bould Brigid is doing the right thing when its with Austin she intends to go. There's no use in letting William think too soon that I'm going to put her after his money. Musha, won't it be the great night entirely she'll have and isn't it the grand comfort to me to think that I have a daughter so accomplished and so lucky and so wise! Arrah, sure, you never could know the grand piece of good fortune she'd be bringing in here upon this very floor some day!"

"The devil a know you know," said Martin doggedly, as he rose from his chair and lurched awkwardly out of the house.

## II

MARTIN had been thinking of a smoke with the little comfort that it brought and a curious turn of reserve here manifested itself. It was part of the usual attitude of a son to a parent in this part of the world. A young man might come home drunk from a fair and use primitive language in the hearing of his mother. But he would never dare to smoke his pipe in her presence. The same young man might take drink for drink with his father in a public house and enter into the general blasphemy of the place, but he would go out into the yard to light his pipe.

Now, therefore, that Martin had moved out of the presence of his mother he leaned across the boreen gate pulling at his pipe in keen enjoyment and listening. He could hear the sound of men coming from their labour down all the distant boreens, but this sound came to be replaced gradually by the heavy tramp, tramp of nailed brogues down all the road into Glan-nidan. There was an eager look upon the faces that went by, burning out through the dusk as they went down the road. It was no portion of Martin's existence yet, somehow, it appeared as a comfort to the others as they went on to the pubs at the end of the day. They were not like him, despondent, weary, but men with a purpose in life hurrying erectly along the road. Their pipes too were alight, and left a dense fog of smoke behind them. They seemed to be smoking in ecstasy as if to produce that very thirst which was burning from their tongues down into their very hearts. Soon



they would be drinking and talking as they stood by the wet counters in the stinking pubs of Glannidan while a great forgetfulness came upon them, a horrible prelude to swinish sleep.

"There must be something in it after all," he would say, but a few hours later he would be convinced of its emptiness as he listened to them stuttering homeward in utter degradation, bawling songs which shuddered away beneath the moon into the dark stillness of the bog. And as he listened to these sounds of their return he would have just spent the evening with Lucy Flynn.

Lucy represented the bit of excitement which kept him from Glannidan in the evenings. Step by step they had been driven inevitably into this comradeship of one another. His father, Arthur Duignan, had made Glannidan a place of dread in the household, and one to which his steps should not turn. Her father, Henry Flynn, angry with his wife that she had not borne him a son, had turned to warp the mind of his daughter towards a mannish love for the land producing something unnatural in a body that had some show of comeliness, a girl who talked about cattle and the crops and went through the fields like no female to observe the fruiting of the earth. Even about Glannidan it was as natural for a man to be a drunkard as for a girl to be vain of her skin and hair and anxious to buy pretty, flowered hats to adorn herself from Esther Gilligan, the milliner. But the mind of Lucy Flynn was all upon land and upon Martin Duignan, because he had a bit of land. Continually their conversation turned curiously:

"How much did yous get for the black heifer at Ballycullen fair?"

"Twenty-four ten was what my father held out for and got."

"By hell, I wouldn't doubt you!"

"She was a fine baste to grow up from a bit of a calf that was bought from a dealer."

"How's the turnips doing with yous this season?"

"Middling, middling, the devil a more!"

"But the *praties* is doing well, I suppose."

"Now d'ye know what I'm going to tell you, there's nothing like the new seed!"

"The devil a thing. . . Come out here across the hedge, Lucy, and give me a court!"

"Indeed then I won't. I have a pig's pot to boil yet, and then mebbe I'd have to stay up a part of the night for the white cow's time was up a week ago."

They would often part there and then without another word beyond this outburst of agricultural tenderness, and Martin would take another way through Glannidan while the night was still young. Sometimes he would peer in through the windows at the men drinking by the wet counters. . . He would guess from the looks on their faces that they were talking of the land. It was the crude magic of the land that held them all through the day and even now, in their hour of lesiure, they could not let it out of their minds. But, as Martin glimpsed those looks beyond the windows, his mind would return to the comfort of Lucy Flynn. She too was always talking of the land, but one night he had crossed a gate between their fields and kissed her fiercely upon the wet, red lips. Then he had looked quietly upon her face and had felt a kind of gladness from gazing upon it, so soft and white amid the green fields. . .

This was the little dream which lit his mean life in Glannanea, but he had never a thought that his dream might merge into reality. Sometimes this sense of impossibility would crush in upon him with such strength that he would turn away from the windows of Glannidan in search of other comfort. He found it generally in the little crowd of girls who passed after nightfall down the secluded ways leading out of Glannidan, with their hair down their backs in rich, shining plaits. They would smile up into his face as they went by or across their shoulders after they had gone past him. He would steal after them, often for long distances down the roads, yet always without speaking to them or entering into their company. Their rich young bodies moving gladly on their shapely limbs, the velvet whiteness of their skin against the velvet darkness of the night; the music of their young, pleasant voices when they sang snatches of old songs, the cloudy impression which their moist red lips made upon him when they smiled, the wounding magic of their eyes; all these seemed to melt his very being into a helpless wonder. . .

## III

**I**F there was little change in Martin's condition from day to day his sister moving towards the realisation of her beauty seemed to represent an advance in the adventures of the household. The Spring was flowing in over Glannanea, and as he went his way now the boreen down to the tillage fields was arched loftily by the morning sky and the world was always a great, windy mass of illumination. There was a hush, as if of wonder, upon the gray stone walls that stretched away into the sleeping fields. A new day was rising into strength like a giant coming out of his bed with long, balmy yawns. . . . To Martin there always appeared a fine feeling of pleasure in leaving the house when the fresh, blue smoke was like a pencil mark against the fleecy sky. There was something of perpetual wonder in thus hurrying forth to meet the day. He was heavy of gait and heavy of look, and to all outward seeming he had no great stir of thought in his mind as he went down to the fields. Through a break in the trees he could always see where the newly turned earth was fresh and red. . . . At intervals he would meet people upon the way, drovers, tramps and men of pride and substance. The men of cattle did not seem to dislike this young man who wore the appearance of a farmer. They would stop to talk with Martin of their cattle and the prospect of the prices at Ballycullen fair, while about them stretched far away the level, lifeless fields.

"Well, begad, 'tis a grand day!"

"Begad, 'tis a grand day!"

Now and again he would meet a girl going to the well, the sunlight catching the tin of her can like a mirror and making a little bright dancing spot before her. At this hour of the morning her hair would be loosely pinned. The lack of a corset would show in the hang of her cotton dress as it fell around her like a Greek garment. She was surely a farmer's daughter and the wife of a farmer in the making, and later on some quiet evening in the winter she would be sold into slavery from her father's house. The word would have gone abroad that she was a "great worker"—this going to the well so ostentatiously was part of her endeavour for a reputation. So also was the feeding of pigs outside her father's door on the morning of a fair in Ballycullen or when people would be passing the road in throngs. Then the old women who went the rounds of the houses would drop an observation like this in many a place:

"Begad, she's a great worker!"

"Is that so, begad?"


"She'd make a bloody fine wife for a man!"

"She's up at six in the morning and feeds a power of pigs. Why she'd be nearly as good as a man in the house. D'ye know what I'm going to tell you now? Sure a lassie like that'd make up a man in a couple of year."

Then the inevitable sequel to this talk—the girl herself hearing that a match for her was coming along in a week or two betaking herself to her room to dream over the beauty of her body and to read the letters that had once been sent her by a good-looking shop-boy in Dublin. And then, her thought upon the mar-

riage that was coming, so disgusting and loveless. When she had done many a thing that had gone to build up her reputation of being a "great worker" there had been a queer pain in her heart. . . Then there was the visit to the house of the man to whom she was to give her life; that dark dramatic coming in the winter evening, somewhat drunk and bringing a bottle of whiskey as the passport. . . There would be tea or the drinking of the whiskey in the musty, unfrequented parlour. After a satisfactory discussion of the fortune her father and mother would be sure to excuse themselves and leave her alone with "himself" to be. . . And then the little vision of her life would narrow down so quickly just as she broke from the room. In a mad moment of rebellion she thought of herself, not as the girl with the great reputation as a worker, but as the girl who had once seen her own beauty in the fact that she had been sent love-letters by a shop-boy in Dublin, broken ere her time with the labour of the fields and the labour of child-bearing, her husband maybe turned to beating her when he had brought about the desolation of all she had once possessed—the children born of lust and not of love springing up around them.

It was strange that in these occasional glimpses Martin should be meeting a certain heavy gloom of life upon the morning road. In the turn of his imagination there lingered a thought of Lucy Flynn. It was queer to think if he would not bring her some lovely years before the end. But what might he ever be but a great, big clod of a farmer? Already was he beginning to hang the jowl of one, and Lucy had won the reputation of being a "great worker," although many a time he had seen her with a dark weariness about her eyes.



But there was his sister, Brigid. She seemed to be going down a different road, but it too was a road of morning. She had more beauty than most other girls of Glannidan or Glannanea, but she had no fortune and had not even made her reputation as a worker. But there were wise women who said that they had known of the like of her making a good match, even marrying, I thank ye, beyond her class. This was viewed as an enormous social offence in the locality, but the sufferings of Mary Duignan during the lifetime of her husband somewhat excused her ambition although it had brought about this clash between her son and her daughter. Yet she could never help feeling a flame of pride leap through her, its glow lighting up her pale cheeks, when she saw Brigid setting forth upon her shining bicycle to idle away the evening in Glannidan. She would have spent the whole forenoon adorning herself, never so much as lifting a hand to help in the preparation of Martin's dinner when he came in sweating from the fields. Her selfish attitude had once put him into such a rage that he had broken the looking-glass before which he had found her tittivating herself. He had been sorry a second later, and his mother had said so mournfully:

"Now isn't that a shame for you, Martin, to go do that to your little sister Brigid, and she so fond of you. To go break a looking-glass, why you'll have no luck for seven years, and that's as sure as you're there."


She appeared a fine lady coming into Glannidan round the sweep of the hill past the door of the forge, the grimy blacksmiths running out to look at her as she went by and saying:

"Indeed I don't wonder at Austin Fagan taking

a fancy to her. Damn it, but she's a sweet cut of a lassie!"

Into Corrigan's she would go, for the paper probably, buying a novelette, not that she intended to read it, but just for the excuse of buying something. Miss Agnes Corrigan would come out of the mouldy room where she spent the time reading the novelettes, which she sold later for a penny or threepence each, and as she came out to attend a customer there would seem to linger about her a subtle aroma of romance, a fragrant essence, the scent of the conversation lozenges she had just been chewing with her decayed teeth mingling with the scent of the "parma-de-violets" she sold at a penny a bottle. As she stood there gabbing, her pince-nez hung upon her breast by a gold chain, she would be speaking the nicest words out of books in the broad accent of county Meath. . . She was one of the few people in Glannidan who were possessed of a definite purpose in life, and girls flocked to her as to some mistress of an art. She initiated them into the ways of courtship and flirtation. Whenever she heard of such and such a girl having anything to do with a certain man she became eloquent in her advice. She told the girl things about men, queer things that were not to be found in books. . .

For Brigid, after her visit to Miss Corrigan, there were a few words to be passed with Esther Gilligan, the milliner, who lived behind a wide window in the very middle of Glannidan. She had grown old and loveless but she still took a great interest in the romance of the neighbourhood. She could give a "quare cut" to any girl if she became aware of her settled designs on any man, and out of the bitterness of her disappointed





heart she would speak with an impassioned bluntness. Then there was the visit to the Post Office, the old woman there exercising a kind of lure or fascination towards the persecution of her presence.

And later some lout of Glannidan shouting some absurd piece of slang as she swung homeward into the shadows of the evening only to find on reaching the house her brother looking at her so sullenly across the table, the crude mess of his evening meal broken roughly before him.

## IV

THERE was something very notable about a dance in Glannidan. It was at once a concentration of life and an opportunity to express criticism of life. People were drawn to it by their love of talk merely that they might be the better tormented by the talk that came out of it. Seeing that a dance was something to which each person contributed, it was only natural to think that each person would partake to some degree of its results, and so it was always.

Even old Anastasia Hennessy, who never did a hand's turn before God but tramping from one house to another and prating about Glannidan, would say as a young girl passed her door next day:

"There she is now, and wasn't she the great little swell last night with all her fine gee-gaws and her nice little clothes upon her, and will you look at her now, the dirty little faggot, with the holes in the heels of her dirty stockings!"

This was portion of the jubilant talk expressing reality of vision which succeeded the dance, but the beginning of the dance in a murmur of talk was like the beginning of a dream. And here was a fact that was sometimes announced in a mood of prophecy and doom. There never was a dance yet but something happened at it or after it, something "quare."

Brigid Duignan was going to the St. Patrick's Day dance in Glannidan—and her mother was anxious now with a great anxiety for the future of her daughter. Martin was growing more and more morose. Some-

thing that had been hidden in him was creeping fuller and fuller into life. It reminded Mary Duignan of her dead husband, Arthur Duignan, and so she was beginning to be troubled even as she had been troubled during the lifetime of Arthur. There were evenings now when he came home from the tillage field before the ringing of the Angelus and sat long before the fire without a word coming from him. . . Arthur Duignan in pursuit of his general uselessness had filled many of the small rooms of the house with books. Long ago, when they had been prosperous, when she had just come to Glannanea with her fine fortune, Arthur had had business then on Thursdays in the cattle market at Dublin. . . She could still picture his setting out to that place, with his wide tie of rich silk wound about his collar and his half-tall hat, starting for the railway station at Tubbermoyle or Ballycullen, promising her that he would not touch a drop this time, and she standing at the door viewing him go down the road a fine figure of a man walking erectly behind his cattle. Then the bad word coming back to her through the mouth of someone who had just been in Dublin.

"Did you see himself at all and you in the city?"

"Indeed, then, I did, ma'am. He was driving speechless through the streets on an outside car, and sure I nearly fell out of my standing when I saw the quare direction he was taking. It was towards no good part of the city he was going, but I'll say no more. . ."

Then she would move very quietly into the house at the very time maybe that the anxiety of Martin or Brigid was upon her and wondering why her man wanted to be driving like that through the streets of Dublin and she the way she was. . . Then there was

his home-coming, half drunk and with a queer look in his eyes. . . This was the Arthur that always came home to her, unchanged and without a sign of improvement in his ways, but a big hole made in the price of the few beasts he had brought with him to Dublin. . . There was always a couple of parcels in the back of the high trap which she would examine after she had put him snoring to bed. It seemed curious that the parcels never varied—a big band-box for her holding a new hat all gaudy with flowers and ribbons . . . she would be a grand-looking exhibition if she went to Mass in that with all the people jumping in their seats to look at her as she went by. It was curious beyond all that he should wish to see her decked out in such a way. She who had come to him of a respectable family and with a fine fortune. It was the quare things they must wear in Dublin and the quare women they must be altogether. Yet she was not wholly displeased that he should think of her in this way, but it was a wicked waste of money . . . yet the other parcel always pained her more—books. Such nonsense for anyone to buy! Things, musha, that could be put to no use at all. The hats, queer as they were, were good to look at from time to time. . . They brought her such pretty thoughts now that her days were approaching. . .

And when Arthur returned to even passable sobriety after one of these Dublin visits and lingered for a clear day or two from the widow Kelly's she saw with amazement how he took to the books and seemed to find comfort in them. For her own part she had never read a book and could not possibly guess what might be in them. But Arthur, her man, came daily out of the room where he wasted precious hours, and went

walking around his dwindling bit of land, a queer, grandiose smile upon his face but with no meaning in it that anyone could see. . . Then she would see him as suddenly passing back into the grey mood and returning again to the widow Kelly's. A few months later came the sale of a few more cattle in Dublin and a repetition of the same circumstances surrounding their sale. . .

That had made the sad life of Mary Duignan all the while Martin had been rising into manhood and Brigid towards beauty. Sometimes she laughed sadly, but not without some stir of kindly remembrance for Arthur as she saw Brigid looking over the collection of hats in all the queer fashions through which they had descended. It was the nature of a girl to be letting her mind dwell upon such things, but she had felt a queer turn of disgust the day she had first seen Martin taking a liking for the books. She had listened to all of Arthur's fancies for the future of the boy, but well had she endeavoured to turn his mind from such foolishness and towards the land. She had succeeded until now, when this feeling of antagonism for his sister had begun to manifest itself, this clash of will which seemed to foreshadow dark happening in this house. . . She saw the figure of Arthur Duignan again moving gloomily about the house, she saw it in the face of her son bent over a big book at the fire reading foolishness while already people were beginning to talk of his neglect of the land. The steadiness of Martin had always been her proud boast among the women of the boreens.

"Oh not a sup of drink ever he took, not even if he went into Glannidan forty times a day the sorra drop he'd take!"

But to her there had always appeared a subtle correspondence between Arthur's drinking and the books he brought home in the big parcels from Dublin. So now what feelings of gladness she might have experienced from watching the decking out of Brigid for the great dance were dissipated by the sad spectacle of Martin already wasting his time in exact imitation of his father. Even if he had indulged in a more full-blooded foolishness she might have excused him, but this was such nonsense as she could make no attempt to understand.

## V

**T**HROUGH the various excitements of preparation the night of the dance had at last come. It was to be held in the riding-school of Glannidan, or as it was called by some "The Folly" of Glannidan. It was a great circular building which had been erected by St. John Murray, a local aristocrat, a good many years before. Soon after its erection, St. John Murray who had also been one of the most notable gentlemen riders of his generation had broken his neck at Epsom. Then the riding-school had fallen into disuse with Murray Hall, and its existence was never even thought of except on an occasion of this kind. Ancient politicians saw in such a change of occupation a triumph for the forces of the people and said one to the other:

"Now d'ye see that only St. John broke his bloody neck beyant in England he might have turned out the worst pill of all the Murray breed. But we're able to have our sons and daughters to a dance in his riding-school now if we only have the price of the tickets. Arrah, man, d'ye know what I'm going to tell ye? The times is changed."

"Elite." This was a word that had crept unaccountably into the parlance of Glannidan. It here denoted a class much further apart than its meaning in French. "Swank" was another word which as used in Glannidan seemed to be synonymous with "Elite," a translation less of the word than of the mode of life. Yet it was not possible to be "Elite" without being "Swanky," while it was possible to be "Swanky" without being


at all "Elite" or considered so by those who had attained to that condition.

Even at Mass on Sundays the "Elite" made a display of their uplifted condition. They came in late for the service with silver-mounted umbrellas and other apparel of glorified existence, and went up to the very front seats as if to assert their right to be nearer God. They did not believe in vulgarly mixing themselves even in religious circumstances. They sometimes coincided with the handful which formed the Protestant congregation of Glannidan coming down the street from morning prayers. Often they would commingle with these to such an extent that people were driven to say:

"There now, sure the devil a much differ it makes what religion you are so long as you have money enough to 'swank' it!"

All Protestants were "elite," and the highest up and best connected Catholics sniffed audibly when a lousey peasant went in beside them on the seat. . . yet this was accepted as the prerogative of certain families.

"People, don't ye know, like the Connors and the Culligans," a man would say without having any definite idea in his mind as to the exact worth of the Connors and the Culligans, but the very sound of the words as he said them would seem to communicate some kind of idea to his mind. Every event, even to a dance, seemed to be arranged with due respect to the feelings of such families. Hence the man, who springing from the "commonality," attempted to bridge the social gulf and become one of them exercised a disturbing influence and made himself a person to be distrusted and hated both by one group and the other. And such a man was Austin Fagan.





The people of the lower orders remembered Jeremiah Fagan as one of themselves, a big, drunken old fellow, who although semi-illiterate, managed to scribble out the accounts of the Glannidan Union, drawing his salary regularly, and finally a pension. Although he had managed to lift himself into a soft job he had remained one of themselves, and so they had not been given much reason to hate him, but this fellow, Austin, had blossomed out, my word! As he went daily to the post office about eleven he was a constant figure of surprise. People would turn and look after him and say: "Why there's Austin Fagan!" and the remainder of his reputation consisted in that he had been connected with various scandals which had taken place in the workhouse from time to time. He was no longer the mere clerk of his father's day, but an official of local government who went loudly about Glannidan and whose name was on every lip. Not alone had he increased the splendour of his position but he had also increased his salary. He had been careful that those he used, both men and women, were such as could be silenced with a few pounds; but there was a fire of hatred for him smouldering. The hum of his motor bicycle as he careered idly down the summer roads had raised up a feeling of anger which might not be easily quenched.

It was at a dance, beyond all other places, that Austin was most loudly in evidence. As he came into the room where the first dance would have begun to whirl, his accent could always be heard above the hum of the talk and the flow of the music, laughing, saying courteous and gallant words to the girl he had brought with him. Then, as he glided in, his round face

shining and his thin hair brushed sleekly down upon his small head above his low narrow forehead it was at once easy and difficult to realise why he had become so captivating. Later his exquisite philandering, and, towards morning, a withdrawal with one particular girl to a secluded part of the room, whispering and giggling and telling queer stories.

The behaviour of Austin at this St. Patrick's night dance in Glannidan was not so different. Yet there were some well versed in his ways, who said that it was. To them it appeared as if he had taken a genuine liking for Brigid Duignan. Even so, thought William Moore, who, as his rival, was forced to be observant. As the night extended into morning they thought that, after all, it might be a case of genuine love, and at once began to envy Brigid. Austin Fagan had a nice soft job. Wasn't she lucky now, and she never to do a hand's turn, the idle strap? Her mother had been ambitious too, but Arthur Duignan, God be good to him, was the man had kept her down well, and it would be a terrible thing if she got a lift by such a marriage now. . .

While wise heads were already being put together over this Austin Fagan was walking down the avenue from the riding-school with Brigid Duignan as the day was breaking beyond Murray Hall. They still retained some of the splendour through which they had just moved, but in the dawn all things look mean. The trees by the avenue were dripping in a sudden wind as he drew her into the shelter of a great beech. . .

As they moved away down the avenue and out of sight of Murray Hall Brigid felt a wave of dread rush in to envelop her. He left her at a gate which was not very far from the house in the boreens. . .

"I hope you had the grand, lovely night, child," said her mother, who had awaited this home-coming so anxiously. Brigid seemed on the point of tears as she hurried past her mother and into her room. Martin glanced up with a scowl but did not speak. He had a book beneath his elbow and was noisily taking his breakfast. She threw herself upon the bed without removing the grand dress she had worn at the dance. She covered her head with the bed-clothes to keep herself from hearing the muttered curses of her brother. . .

## VI

THE books had begun to exercise an influence over Martin; morning or evening he was scarcely ever without a book in his hand now. It was queer, right enough, said the people of the boreens. If he had been a girl they might have understood and excused him vaguely that it was only "human nature." But this present lapse on Martin's part was more in the nature of a calamity like drink. It was worse than drink, for that too could be excused. "A good man's case," they were in the habit of saying of one who would occasionally take a drop too much. But that a young fellow should suddenly and for no reason show a distaste for the beloved land—it was a shocking queer thing.

He who had once been so regular in his morning journey down the boreens was now the very last to come, and without any trace at all of his former enthusiasm. And often during the day men would creep over to the ditch to watch him as he stood like a madman in the middle of the field, now looking up at the sun, now looking in a dull way at the earth. . . They used to marvel what he could be about. Later, if the evening happened to be fine, as they went towards Glannidan they would see him leaning across the road gate his eyes intently fixed upon the printed page of a book.

"Musha, it's not the same way everyone goes mad!" they would say with a loud smirk as they went by.

Day by day his father, Arthur Duignan, struggled further to life in him. There was no stint of books

in the house, for his father had brought home a great many from time to time.

"Arrah, musha, where did you get them?" Mary Duignan had often said by way of giving vent to her annoyance upon the appearance of an unusually large parcel.

"Down the Quays."

"I suppose them cost a good penny now!"

"Oh, only a few shillings."

"Well, imagine that now! Selling books, begad! The Quays—well! well!"

Martin had remembrance of such words passing between his parents. He was very small when he had heard them, but now, with his discovery of the books, he began to have some sympathy with and understanding of his father. He too, poor man, had found some comfort amid their pages and in their strange tales of love and passion. The mind of his father must have dwelt upon these things and Martin often felt himself thinking how he could have married this woman, his mother, so different must she have been always, so wedded to the land. The books were already beginning to separate him more and more from his mother, but not to such an extent as had existed surely in the case of his father.

He had little for which to thank his father unless perhaps this hereditary love for the printed page which now lifted him up from the dusty tumult of the clay to a little comfort. Yet he could not quite forgive his father for the way he had neglected the land and thus brought him to the muck and torment of his early years. And their farm, too, might have been made the most comfortable of all the farms of the boreens.

He felt this almost insensibly for he had still the agrarian eye. Thus, distinct from the clash that had arisen in the circumstances of his family just now, there was a clash also between the elements of his soul; and this was further extended by the influence of the books. There arose out of his reading a figure of beauty, an ideal figure. He grew to have a love of woman that found no response amid the passionless fields.

The river of romance had already begun to flood his soul. The "made match" already suggested by his mother was alien and remote from the books left him by his dead father. There was Lucy Flynn. If he should marry her it might not be altogether a case of this kind. She might bring him a fortune, and possibly the farm of her father to be amalgamated with his. Now the very fact that his mother had mentioned marriage to him had created a kind of shy reserve about his thought of Lucy, a certain diffidence of intention. No doubt people had already begun to talk about the eye he had on Henry Flynn's farm. . . . So now his thought of girls had most to do with those he had seen passing off into the twilight with their shapely figures and their brown plaits swinging richly . . . and yet, with strangely greater continuity, his own figure of beauty would be dancing before him wildly above the pool of beauty that was the books. Already it had lured him to thought of the bigger world beyond the boreens.

He was changing daily in his relations to his mother, and, in the blindness of inevitability, it was not given her to realise the cause. It was very little that she knew only of this mean life in Glannanea. The *Ballycullen Gazette*, whose local correspondent was Brian

Doyle, was the only thing she ever read; a queer, muddy rag which was distinguished only by fearsome grammar and exhibited the varying degrees of spite which Brian felt for those who had the misfortune to incur his illiterate censure. Mary Duignan gloated over it when it contained as it often did some particularly long account of some local "case." She would sit by the fire reading it with difficulty, and then turning her eyes from it she would allow a certain wistfulness to creep into them as she began to plan for the future of her daughter, who was never likely to meet with a misfortune like that of which she had just been reading. . . . Often, too, Martin turned to the *Ballycullen Gazette* after his day's work and struggled through the columns of the dirty rag. The "style" of Brian Doyle was always a cold-blooded attack upon the English language. Of course he was merely a bosthoon who, through a certain amount of cheek earned a few pounds a year in doing this kind of thing for the local paper. Often, as he saw his mother reading the *Ballycullen Gazette*, Martin would leave aside his book and write down with a stub of pencil his own version of some scene or incident that had struck his fancy. He found great pleasure in writing such exercises and many a time he would read them aloud in the fields, his ear taking pleasure in the musical swing of the words.


His father had been a miscellaneous reader. His books had been got together carelessly. There were scientific books by the side of poetry books, novels by the side of religious volumes. It was a remarkable feeling this of the mind responding rapidly to the accumulation of a vast deal of knowledge, of groping beyond the rim of broken clay. . . And yet there were

moments when the knowledge he had just acquired would surge, a burning whirl, in his brain, until at last he went for comfort down the clean, green ways of the boreens. There were the homely comforts of his mother's house in the evenings while the world of the books was vague with an eternal wonder. Around him surged the life of the fields all blind and stupid while, from day to day, he was growing to see more clearly the mistake and the mess that all men make of their lives, the distance they continually endeavour to set between themselves and the beauty that he saw. . .

Now that the summer was about them again he often thought of Lucy Flynn. He often went across the ripening meadows to speak to her by the old gate at the close of a lovely day. But their talk was always sordidly upon things of the land. What this was worth and what that was worth, what her father had just said about the value of such and such a thing and so on. Her mind never once rose above the realism of the land. She had heard her father speak of Martin and of the way he was letting his grand farm go to the bad, and now she counselled him upon diligence and attention to such a splendid way of living.

"I wouldn't mind, Martin, if you were a drunkard, but to be getting like this, a kind of foolish about books and idling away your time. Why sure no one ever heard tell of the like of it. And sure what would I do if ever you turned against me through that way of going on, or made me turn against you by your getting to be like your father, who was a common idiot by all accounts!"

They were all very keen on insulting the memory of his father, even Lucy now. Through his own love for





the books he was rapidly inviting the very same distrust and hatred. . . He went across the gate and bending his head down to Lucy spoke to her for a long time. Then she put her arms about his shoulders and whispered passionately as her hot cheek burned:

"Martin, I love you. God's truth, I love you, Martin!"

It was a phrase out of the books, given the colour of the peasant speech, and it fell upon his soul like rain upon a parched thing. If only she had ever read anything she might be like him, was the flash of his thought which lit up all the darkness of the fields.

## VII

THE Summer had swung in and the beauty of this time in Ireland had some of the pain that was passing in the house of the Duignans. But, inevitably, was it closing in towards the sorrow of some ending. In spite of the sneers that had risen against him, Martin's hard work of early spring was proven in the fields which were now waving green and high. He had not yet lost all the curious, dogged pride the farmer takes in his poor assistance of God's handiwork. He could still feel the something in him which called him to the clay and he knew that he did not yet come winging from out the books as his father must have done when he went driving in his half-tall hat through the streets of Dublin. There was surely some part of him which was still stuck in the little nest of fields behind the boreens, and he felt that it was through his mother that this bondage had come.

There was still his sister Brigid. She was certainly a pretty girl comely in the possession of qualities which in him were differently expressed, qualities which likened both of them to their father. Many a time he could not help an attempt to realise the way in which his father must have regarded her. . . He pictured him, if he had lived to see her spring so fine, fancying a marriage for her with some gorgeous young man out of a story, but merely dreaming all the while, a big windy man talking in his cups about the fine daughter he had, doing nothing for her either but merely dragging her name down among the dirty drunkards in the widow Kelly's

pub in Glannidan. . . Turning in disgust from all this sorry hopelessness his mind had begun to struggle into admiration for the realism of his mother. After all the gropings of her ambition were bound to leave some solid result behind them. And this regard lit up other ways of understanding. Suddenly it had appeared to Mary Duignan that she had something to thank the books for after all. They had helped her son to exhibit some quality to which she had once turned with affection in Arthur Duignan. "Refinement" had been the word used to describe it by old Roger Gowney who had settled the match so long ago. It was the thing that had made her "cotton to" her husband to be. Now its reappearance had effected this miracle of reconciliation between her son and herself and between her son and his sister.

A change had come upon Brigid too, since the St. Patrick's night dance in Glannidan. It was now her mother's turn to be angry with her. She went seldom to Glannidan in the evenings, and so did not seem to make the best of her chance of catching William Moore, who was nothing short of a good match, by letting him see Austin Fagan's interest in her. At twilight time she would sit mooning there in the bedroom, looking at herself in the big mirror and binding and unbinding her hair. . . To lose the chance of a good match! Indeed it was nothing short of a flight in the face of Heaven to let her dream of such things. . . But the matter was brought to a head by Brigid herself who fainted before the mirror one evening after she had cycled home from Glannidan.

"What is it, child; what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, mother! It's Austin Fagan. I thought he was

going to marry me. Now he says he won't, and he after——

"What's that, after what? After ruining you, is it?"

"Oh, mother, I thought he would be such a grand match, and I knew how much you wanted me to get a good match. Sure I thought he'd be better than any farmer with the grand sit he has and all the grandeur he'd give me. He said he'd get a side-car for the motor bike and drive me down by the boreens the way they'd all see me looking so grand."

"It happened at the dance, I suppose?"

"Yes, mother!"

"Oh, God bless us and save us! Why didn't I let you go there with William Moore!"

Martin came in now. From the expression on his face it might seem that the clay had somehow succeeded in subduing him. The spiritual look the books had brought him seemed momentarily quenched. He looked sweaty and tired standing there in the doorway.

"What's this now?" he said, as he saw the huddled body of his sister and his mother crying.

No answer, only his sister sobbing and his mother saying: "Dear-a-dear!"

"Is it Austin Fagan?"

Still no answer from either of the women, and then Martin knew. . . He swore no word but went into his room and put on his Sunday clothes. There was nothing very elaborate in this outfit—just a suit of rough tweed from the factory in Ballycullen, a pair of nailed brogues, slightly lighter than the ones he wore on week days, and a bright tweed cap pulled down in his eyes. These suited his figure as he slouched along.

It was his intention, as he left the house to see his

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parish priest and to tell him the whole story. Then he must seek Austin Fagan, and there might be red murder this very evening in the office of the Union.

Father Clarke sat in a luxurious chair in his dining room. Martin entered shyly and very soon felt his temper cool in the presence of this big, comfortable man of the world. Austin Fagan was a man of position and reputation in the parish, while he was only a struggling clod of a farmer. The Clerk of the Union was a bit of a blackguard to be sure, but he could afford to be a blackguard, and so Father Clarke never even mentally included him among the ruffians who sometimes disgraced the parish. Martin, as he began to speak, felt himself being still further awed by the holy pictures which hung all around the walls.

"My sister is after being destroyed, Father!"

"Well, and who's the scoundrel?"

"Austin Fagan."

"This is terrible. What are you going to do?"

"That's just what I called to ask you, Father. Wouldn't you think now that it's him should do something after he destroying her and us that belong to her!"

Martin was momentarily surprised by his bravery in speaking thus to his parish priest. . . But he could feel no triumph. . .

"Well, well! I'm surprised to hear this of such a promising young man as Austin. But I wish to goodness people would not be flying in my face by getting up dances. Do you know what I'm going to tell you? The devil does be always lurking in the shadows around a dance no matter how "elite" or how "swanky" it may be. So come on down with me to the workhouse now and mebbe the grace of God would enable us to see the silver lining to the darkest cloud."

## VIII

UP through the main street of Glannidan they went together, Martin walking shyly. Everyone in the shops and on the street knew what had happened, and exclamations of jubilation immediately leaped up among them:

"There's the dance for you, there now!" "And what'll Austin do now?" "And d'ye think will he lose his job?" "The devil a fear of him!" "Is it Austin?" "Man alive, it won't take a feather out of him!"

Father Clarke as he walked, talked continuously to himself, but not in a way, however, which betokened great worry or pre-occupation, for this was merely a habit of his and a stage of his merely theatrical rage when a matter of this kind was brought before him. . . . He closed one eye every few minutes and took a side glance at the lout trotting by his side.

They were now on the road which led from the village to the workhouse. Down the same way were going the itinerant tramps for a night's shelter and up to the village for their pints were coming the established tramps, the men who got a continuous and comfortable living in the workhouse. First came Kerrigan, the father of them, scratching his beard, which was great and white like a prophet's. He ran messages for the nurses and was paid at the rate of a pint a time. Fourteen times a day he came thus scratching his beard into Glannidan. Even fairly snug farmers envied him greatly. If ever they came into Glannidan in the day

time and gulped down a few pints, half ashamed of themselves, they were sure to meet Kerrigan running out of the widow Kelly's, the brown froth of the porter on his beard and spitting out at every few yards.

"Well be jaises it's not fair to see that fellow with such times. It's bad enough to be keeping Austin Fagan and his like in idleness, but it bates hell to be keeping him—an idle, lousey ould cur!"

This would be the burden of their soliloquy as they went cantering along in their high traps, men without an atom of joy to ease the ugly burden of their lives, while Kerrigan, the pauper, whistled gaily as a bird. He had lost what land he had once possessed and had come into Glannidan Workhouse to end his days. He had a happy life and looked a very distinguished pauper indeed as he went in and out of Glannidan in his hard hat over his black frieze coat and corduroy trousers.

"Good evening, Father!" said Kerrigan, saluting grandly.

"Good evening, Kerrigan!" said Father Clarke.

A little further on they met Keogan, the defective pauper, whose mind like his face had an unaccountable twist towards the comic. He indulged his idiocy in satire through ludicrous mimicry which occasionally appeared gruesome.

There was a horrible leer on his face when he moved in exaggeration of his own natural limp and stroked the air under his bare chin in imitation of Kerrigan stroking his beard. . . when he walked with his cap adjusted at an exciting angle, and smoked a butt of a fag while he attempted to transform his hideous gibberish into a polished accent he was making a pathetic attempt to imitate Austin Fagan.

The third established pauper whom they now met was an elderly quiet man of decided sanity whose mentality was advertised in his quiet bearing. His beard was trimmed very tidily, his dark, little eyes far sunken in his head and his face white like a woman's. His voice came from a sorrowful depth and he maintained his mournfulness even while drinking a pint. And it was well-known that he could drink more than Kerrigan, and without turning a hair. . .

They moved up a short avenue to the workhouse gate. On either side a few old pauper women were weeding. They did not even lift their eyes to look at the passers-by. . . As they went into the yard they saw a minor official of the workhouse gather the skirts of his coat under his arm and hurry across the yard. But one or two of the dozen of stout he was carrying slashed out and the necks were broken of them against the trodden gravel of the yard. One of the bottles rolled towards them and struck against the toe of Father Clarke's boot. He turned a woe-begone face to Martin:

"One of the ruinations of poor Ireland. I pray you avoid it, young man, and let it never contaminate your lips."

Drink! The idea struck queerly upon Martin's mood. Beyond the torment through which his mind was passing he could understand this thing now. . . He had a momentary glimpse of men drinking away their sorrow in the widow Kelly's. . . It was curious that the power of drink should have been suggested to him so ironically. He felt like doing something now which might help him to forget. And this was worse than the death of



a beast, because it was worse than the death of a Christian. . .

But already they had walked into the Clerk's office. It was the evening of a Board Day and Brian Doyle had remained behind to help the Clerk in his work upon the minutes of the meeting. This was a customary performance, somewhat sacred to Brian and Austin. Austin permitted Brian to ape his accent and personality for being so obliging in permitting him to censor his reports of the meetings of the Glannidan Union, which appeared every second Thursday in the *Ballycullen Gazette*. It was not everything that happened at a meeting was fit to be put into a paper. . . Consequently here were these two now with their heads together whispering and writing. Austin was writing the official minutes of the meeting on a form which was to be sent to the Local Government Board that very evening: Brian was writing his report for the *Ballycullen Gazette*. From time to time they compared notes to make sure that in the more important points their accounts were identical. It was amusing to see the way that Brian threw down his pen at exactly the same moment as Austin yawned, and when Austin extended the slit of his thin lips in a smile Brian showed his big teeth simultaneously.

They now said "Good evening, Father!" at exactly the same moment and gave a skit of a laugh in unison. Immediately Austin was telling a funny story of Local Government Board and Father Clarke was laughing great big laughs which shook the office. Brian remained fiddling with his pencil and his notebook, dutifully echoing the merriment of these two men whom he admired in the very depths of his feeble

imitative soul. . . All three were still unmindful of the man who had walked down to the workhouse with Father Clarke and who now stood in the passage between the workhouse and the board-room twisting his cap and tearing little bits out of it while a great rage rent his soul.

## IX

AT the end of their joke Father Clarke called Austin out of the office by a jerk of his head. He came out, and the three men now stood in the passage. An immediate and sharp contrast was apparent. The Clerk of the Union looked so sleek and summery in his oiled hair and flannel suit by the side of this man of the clay.

"Good evening, Duignan!" said Austin.

"Good evening, Mr. Fagan," said Martin.

Austin sprang open his silver cigarette case and put a fag pendulously between his lips. He had the reputation of being the one man in Glannidan who could smoke a cigarette properly, and this was a fact he did not seem to forget even now. . . . Father Clarke spoke after an awkward moment:

"Martin here was making a kind of suggestion and we coming down the road, that it might be as well, maybe, if you were to think of getting married, Austin."

There was a twinkle in his eye as he said this, as if he still felt inclined to be jocular at the expense of Martin and his sister. The blood of Martin was beginning to boil.

"Are you going to marry Brigid?" he jerked out. The words seemed to ring with clear finality in the little passage.

"Marry Brigid, what?" For the moment Austin appeared stunned, but there was a show of calmness in his grin as he raised his yellow fingers to his head

and patted his sleek hair. Father Clarke took out a big red handkerchief and blew his nose with a great blast of sound.

"Easy now, Martin! Your mother——"

"Ah, this is no woman's job."

"Quietly now, we don't want any nonsense."

There was a red mist before the eyes of Martin; he lashed out and struck Austin between the eyes and blood pumped out of the Clerk's nostrils.

"What d'ye mean to go strike Mr. Fagan like that and he not in an attitude of defence! I'm ashamed of you as one of my parishioners!"

Brian Doyle rushed out of the office.

"You bloody cur!" he said to Martin. The bogman had momentarily asserted himself in the devoted follower of the Clerk of the Union.

"That'll do now!" said Father Clarke. "The fact that your sister has been misfortunate gives you no license to behave in this high-handed way. D'ye know what it is now, I'd nearly feel justified in washing my hands of the whole affair!"

With extraordinary suddenness a change had come upon the workings of Martin's mind. Where was the result now of all his reading of romance? Here in this first crucial moment of his life it was the brutal and passionate peasant that had appeared and not any removal of himself from the peasant by any artifice of refinement. The artifice of education had certainly done something for this big man they called Father Clarke, making him subtle, far-seeing, capable of compromise, cunning, powerful. . . Austin was gasping and looking out stupidly through a haze of pain. Brian's face was as big as the moon. . . Into Martin's heart

was beginning to creep a great feeling of abasement. Nothing from the others could lower him further than he had been just lowered by his own conduct.

"By God, Fagan, I'll kill you if you don't marry her!" The words had merely struggled out of his feelings of defeat, but they had a swift effect upon the others. They came together and began to speak in whispers. He drifted to the yard door out of earshot, and stood there as one who has been suddenly snatched away from life. He did not seem to feel that the others were adjusting his fate.

"It would be best to get him away from here."

"It would indeed, Father!" The little mean voice of Brian Doyle could just barely suppress a haw! haw! of a laugh at the expense of Martin as he felt that an adjustment was about to be made in favour of Austin Fagan.

"God knows I don't want to see any bad work, and that's what'll happen surely if this young fellow is allowed to remain here. He'll brood to himself and he'll drink, and the child'll be growing up before his two eyes every day."

Father Clarke looked long at Austin, and immediately the light of realisation was bright between them. . .

"A lump sum of say a £100 to do for this young fellow. It'll be cheap at the price, for a high spirited public young man like you wouldn't like to see himself made a show of in a compulsory job of this kind. Don't you know the influence I have with the solid, respectable men of the Board and a rise of twenty pounds a year or so that I could manoeuvre to recompense you would be nothing to sneeze at."

Brian Doyle's big face was glistening in expectation. He could already see where he would come in.

"Of course you'll use your influence, Brian, through your job on the *Ballycullen Gazette* to help poor Austin through this troublesome business. You'll get his photo printed on the front page and a whole article about the imaginary examinations he's after passing, and a brilliant account of the great man he is entirely, and how Glanidan should be so proud of him. It'll make grand reading for the ratepayers, and they'll forget the kind of man he is exactly—I mean about this kind of thing and the like. It's what they read in the *Ballycullen Gazette*, and not what happens in reality that counts. I often think it a blessing that we have that paper, for it helps us all out of many a hole."

"Oh, you may depend on me to do that, Father. It's not the first time," said Brian with a smirk of pride in remembrance of this, his most notable accomplishment.

"And then, mebbe, when you're well out of the business, Austin, you'll have an idea that you're a finer type of man than ever you were before."

"But when will this move about the rise in my salary begin?" said Austin, now almost fully recovered.

"Oh, just as soon as you can manage the f100, don't you know!" said Father Clarke moving out to accost Martin once more.

## X

IT would mean some scraping to get the £100 together, for it took a good deal to keep up his brilliant appearance as Clerk of the Union before the public, although he made a decent income out of the ratepayers between his salary and his "chances." These "chances" were curious things. They consisted for the most part in bribes from those who contracted for small jobs in the gift of the Board, from the putting of a sucker in a pump to the building of a labourer's cottage. These contracts were supposed to be set by tender, the lowest tender consistent with the best interests of the ratepayers to get the job. But to defeat this possible exercise of fair play was a very easy operation. It consisted only in slipping the tender of the contractor who had given the biggest bribe to the Chairman of the meeting at the proper moment and in destroying those which might afford awkward evidence should they remain to be seen. Any little "scenes" which occurred at meetings of the Board as a result of this "chancing" were never included in the reports of the meetings of the Board which Brian Doyle sent to the *Ballycullen Gazette*. And Brian did all this for nothing, beyond the privilege of being allowed to make himself the dirt which Austin continually wiped off his boots.

But Austin was compelled to do something now which he had never to do before. He had to run around all the contractors of the Union fishing for small sums with vague suggestions. No feeling of regret for the

girl stirred in him, but he cursed her and his luck as he came home from the last of these expeditions, having risen the wind to a much lesser extent than he had expected. He would have to sell the motor bicycle, which had been his proudest appendage of distinction. But he would yet make the bally ratepayers pay through the nose for this.

So a few days later Father Clarke came down the boreens and into the house of Mary Duignan, which was a changed house since this blow had fallen.

"Good day to you, Mrs. Duignan!" he said; "this is the sorry business. Why didn't you keep better correction upon this daughter of yours?"

"Oh, Father, sure it wasn't my fault, nor it wasn't her fault. And what are you going to do to that black-guard, Austin Fagan, if he doesn't marry her?"

"'Tis the hand of God and the will of God, Mrs. Duignan, that determines these things, and mebbe what's going to happen is all for the best. Your son, Martin, is going away!"

She was just in the act of filling out the port wine for him as he said this, and she stopped while her hand trembled and the big tears came rolling into her eyes. . . . Now if it had been her daughter, Brigid, who was going away, and very quietly too, after what had happened, it would not have mattered so greatly. Martin might have married and brought in a daughter-in-law sufficiently fortunèd to fulfil her ambition. This of course when she had finally succeeded in putting between him and Lucy Flynn. . . . There was a kind of drumming in her ears now which kept her from hearing clearly what Father Clarke was saying.

"I'm going to do for him, so I am!"

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"Yes, Father."

"He's a fine, unusual type of young fellow, with a taste for the books, I hear, like his father before him."

"That's true, Father, that's true!"

"I'm going to put him on for the Excise, and it'll be a proud moment for you, Mrs. Duignan, to see him coming home to you with the broadcloth suit on him and the white cuffs down to his fingers."

"A gauger, no less, the gauger Duignan!"

"That's what he might eventually rise to."

"I'm in dread he might turn to the drink, the same as his father before him."

"Time enough having that dread, Mrs. Duignan, until he is a gauger."

"Indeed, I knew he was always too talented for the clay, and wouldn't everything be grand now only for this misfortune to Brigid?"

"All the same we might be able to do something for Brigid, to settle her like. You have a grand bit of farm, and it will be nice and empty when Martin goes off to Dublin to go on for the Excise. There might be a young fellow in a distant part of the country looking for a place to put in his head."

Father Clarke was a man who never made a suggestion out of his imagination, and he now had such a young man in his mind, a half-witted farmer from Mucklin named Jamesey Cassels who had been left a few hundred pounds by an aunt who had just died in America. He had been looking everywhere for a wife, but no one would marry the *omadhaun*. He was at the fair of Glannidan on this very day. So that very evening after his dinner Father Clarke brought Jamesey Cassels out from Glannidan to see the place and to see Brigid.

. . . For half an hour the young man from Mucklin remained, grinning foolishly at Brigid in the kitchen, while her mother and the priest arranged for the future of the couple inside in the room. She was attacked by a huge feeling of physical disgust as she sat and looked at the man with whom she would have to live. She who had worn dainty clothes and longed to be the wife of a man who did not have to soil his hands. It was her brother, Martin, who was going to have the best of it now, while she was to be stuck in the face of the clay with this thing who was now grinning at her foolishly as he sat there upon the other stool. . .

"'Tis a grand place, ma'am, and a fine daughter, and the son you have must be an awful idiot to be hikeing off to the city," said Jamesey Cassels as he stood in the room a little later showing the sheaves of notes, which were his credentials. There and then the marriage was arranged for an early date.

Mary Duignan went quietly about her preparations for the departure of Martin. She bought him a new suit of clothes, which were made by Lowry Pigeon the tailor, and socks and shirts, which she packed into a little imitation portmanteau. There appeared very little that was admirable about this going away. It was something that had been forced upon him by some power outside himself, and it was hard to think that it might ever bring him any great distinction amongst his fellow men.

Now, suddenly, too, his poor surroundings were reappearing to him quite differently. The roads were like white silk ribbons about the bright green of the fields. It was truly beautiful now at midsummer in Glannidan and Glannanea. These places seemed

lightly curtained by a haze of beauty, beauty upon field and tree and upon all glad growing things, a strange, quiet beauty too about the white thatched houses and the blue-hazed bog which stretched away to Ballycullen. It was grand to stand now at the end of the day amid the great diminuendo of the soundless land, to feel the evening shadows creeping in and to sense some of the passionate secrets of the red heart of the clay. His lonely vigils at twilight time made him curiously afraid, and he retreated from them once more to the consolation of Lucy Flynn. . . She appeared strangely intimate now for no other reason, perhaps, than because she was slipping out of his life. Their ways in this place had been wedded to the quality of their lives, and now these ways were about to part . . . yet he kissed her long at the gate when they met one evening and a new tenderness sprang into his heart as he heard her say:

"And sure, I thought, Martin, that you'd never go away from Glannanea. Sure I thought the two farms would grow into one, just naturally. Now you're going to the city where you'll be meeting grand, refined girls, and it's not of me you'll be thinking at all."

"Maybe the city is not my place in life, after all; but I'm in doubt, sure, if this is my place either. Since I began to read and think for myself I've had the queerest thoughts."

"Musha, sure, I think it was the books that done for you. Everyone said it was unlucky for you to be giving up your time to them and you ordained to be a farmer."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her warmly again, but they parted without any words of greater tenderness. . . He thought of her all the way home

across the dew-wet fields. . . When he went into the room where all his father's books were he knew a moment of deeper sadness than had marked his parting with Lucy. The books seemed suddenly more real to him. But as he glanced through a few of them vacantly in turn the image of her would continue to gleam before his eyes. . .

END OF BOOK I



**BOOK II**  
**THE DREAMER**



## BOOK II

## THE DREAMER

## I

**A**S Martin went down the boreens on his way to Dublin next morning the feeling uppermost in his breast was one of emancipation. He was going away from the clay, but even as he went he could not keep his eyes from wandering to the beauty of his tillage field. His corn was standing high and green, and beside it his crop of potatoes made a low waving forest of green. Here lay the result of his labour in quiet days. . . Some power beyond him had turned him away from all these things, and as he stood there gazing wistfully in his new clothes and shiny, fine boots, he was quite unlike the one who had performed all this labour. . . The morning sunlight was sweeping the world in rich waves and he could not resist the impulse that had come upon him. He went out into the field and his eye roamed up and down the grand growth here springing from the clay. . . His brow had been wetted and his body bent in this labour, and now Jamesey Cassels from Mucklin was to know the joy of the harvesting while he was far away in Dublin. He knelt down in a furrow and his head fell among the green leaves of the crop he had sown. For a long time he remained there crying silently, and here surely was



no common sorrow but the sublime dignity of a primal grief. . . His mother had gone to great pains to fit him out for the journey, but now his clothes were soiled by the moist clay and the shine of his boots had been dimmed by the dew-wet grass of the headland. . . He rose up and wiped his eyes with the new silk handkerchief which was Brigid's gift to him at parting, for all the dark feeling of misunderstanding that had always been between them.

He left the field, and again hurried down the boreen. He could hear the "creak, creak" of a cart coming towards him. He raised his eyes suddenly and saw that it was Lucy Flynn in a high creel cart making her way to the bog. She stopped the horse, and bent down to speak to him. She was wearing a rush hat with a broad black ribbon round it, and a white apron with the bands of it passing over her shoulders.

"I thought, mebbe, that I might meet you, Martin, and that's what has me going this way so early."

"Well, good-bye again, Lucy!"

He raised his hand, while hers had gone to fumble in the pocket of her apron. . . But she drew it out and shook his hand warmly. . . He did not hear any movement of the cart going away from him as he went. . . Then she came pattering beside him, a little packet held out in her hand.

"Your little present. Sure I was nearly forgetting."

He tore it open as he hurried on. It was the traditional gift of a maid to a man—a couple of silk ties.

He was driven from the priest's house in Glannidan to the station in Ballycullen by Dickeen the priest, which was the name by which Father Clarke's general man was known. The six peelers of Glannidan were

lounging about the barrack as they drove out of the village.

At Ballycullen he was met by Peter O'Brien, the "Marquis of Clonlough," in whose care he was being sent to Dublin by Father Clarke. Peter, as Chairman of the Glannidan Guardians, just happened to be going to Dublin to attend a Convention of the United Irish League, which was then in its hey day. He was a man who could be relied on to finish off this little job for Father Clarke and Austin Fagan. He looked very big and important and patriotic as he stood there propped up with his silk umbrella on the platform of Ballycullen station.

Now suddenly was Martin coming into contact with the official class. Hitherto this class had been connoted to his mind by Austin Fagan, but now, suddenly, it was appearing that there were other people in the world with soft jobs also. It seemed destined that he might enter this class now. Anyone apart from the land, the stationmaster, the porters, the very stoker and engine-driver, whom he caught a glimpse of with their blackened faces, were all essential figures in the scheme of soft occupations.

Peter O'Brien spoke little in the train. His attention seemed to be altogether concentrated upon his efforts to appear notable and dignified before the other passengers. He had purchased *The Freeman's Journal* at Ballycullen and kept crackling it in his hand all the way to Dublin. He kept closing and unclosing his lips, also his eyes, as he mentally rehearsed the great speech he was going to make at this Convention of Joe Devlin's in Dublin. . . The wandering eyes of Martin were upon the fields now receding rapidly from the train. Quite

unconsciously he was reckoning the quality and value per acre of this piece of land and of that. He saw men moving about their fields in these places, also their eyes bent down affectionately to the clay. . . So this love for the land was no local passion, and all men must feel it as he had felt it. . .

At Broadstone station they stepped from the train and took a hackney car down through the city. The jarvey sat on one side and Peter O'Brien and Martin on the other. The loud powerful voice of "The Marquis" sounded above the boom of the traffic, describing this thing and that, pointing out such and such an hotel where he had stopped with Mr. John Redmond, I thank ye, at such and such a time. . . Great and ever greater Dublin boomed around him. He had known it distantly all his life as the place from which everything came to Glannidan. Now the reality of it was suddenly mysterious, enormous, conspiring in all its constituents to crush him. The streets looked monstrous with their big houses and teeming life, the monuments, the tram-cars and the Liffey appeared also as mute though powerful members of the tremendous conspiracy. There was a queer, wide stillness in his mind, and in the midst of it room for but one realization. He was wondering would it be ever possible for him to become part of this life, . . . His mind and his heart were still back in the fields where he had cried this morning.

They went up Grafton Street, and "the Marquis" said loudly: "The most stylish thoroughfare in Dublin!"

"This is St. Stephen's Green which we will now examine," he said, momentarily dropping into the phraseology and manner of the guide-book. He paid

the jarvey and Martin took down his imitation leather portmanteau from the car. Together they went into the Green by the Fusiliers' Arch, and Martin felt relieved when he saw the green plots and the flowers; "the Marquis" saying ostentatiously at every moment, "A lovely place, a lovely place!" . . . There was a red-faced, beefy man walking about with an air of authority. He carried a blackthorn and wore a high, hard hat with gilt band tied round it. He looked like one of the six peelers of Glannidan as he went his rounds. He was probably an ex-peeler, and momentarily it appeared curious that this solitary link with Glannidan should have arisen.

Soon they were walking up steps to a grand hall door in a quiet street on the other side of St. Stephen's Green. A second later they were standing in a spacious office where there were several girls working at clicking typewriters. A little man with a dark business-like beard now appeared. His eyes had a fiery look behind his gold-rimmed glasses, and his gaze upon Martin was that of a beast of prey upon another victim. He was Mr. Cullen, the head grinder of this "Grinding Establishment." Immediately he fell into conversation with "the Marquis of Clonlough." . . Distantly the sound of their chat came to Martin as he sat there so stiffly upon his seat, feeling very uncomfortable in his new suit and high collar. He became dimly aware that his eyes were wandering across the office to where a girl above her typewriter was gazing at him steadily. Hitherto he had never looked like this into the eyes of any girl save perhaps those of Lucy Flynn, who, however, had never looked so pretty nor with any bright ribbon in her hair. . . Now there were coming into the

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office, every second or so, pale, anaemic young men with big sheaves of papers in their hands. One by one Martin saw Mr. Cullen introduce them to Peter O'Brien as the tutors, and at intervals he saw, hurrying down the stairs from the upper rooms, young men dressed up in sporting clothes even as he had seen Austin Fagan dressed up. . . This was the kind of life he was preparing to enter, he who had rough hands and a sunburnt, freckled face. It seemed queer, and the girl at the typewriter was still looking at him. He had heard "the Marquis" use such phrases as "a National School education," "a taste for reading," "rather an unusual type of young fellow for a farmer." Then the suave "very well, sir, our best attention," of Mr. Cullen. . .

Now came the weary journey on foot through the hard, warm streets with Peter O'Brien, who held his head high as he hummed, exceedingly pleased with himself that at least portion of Father Clarke's enormous trust in him had been faithfully discharged. He was now conducting Martin to the place at which he was to lodge while attending "the Grinders." They entered Cuffe Street, with its confusion of smells, in the heat of noontide. It was this way that the lodging-house lay.

"Aye, this is Mrs. McQuestion's!" said Peter O'Brien as they stopped a little further on outside the window of a grimy lodging house. Through the murky glass they could see a great swarm of flies buzzing around a piece of meat in the window. . . They went in, the door-bell giving a harsh, little clang as they entered. Martin saw a woman, not unlike his mother in appearance, but she did not possess the clean tidiness of his

mother. . . The performance, as with Mr. Cullen, was here repeated, and Martin felt a little turn of annoyance sweep in on him. He was being arranged for, but without the slightest regard for what his own wishes might be. . . Then Mrs. McQuestion shook hands with Peter O'Brien and some money passed between them. . . Later, as he sat down to a curious looking dinner in the little, smelly kitchen, Martin was forced to remember that "the Marquis" had gone to one of the hotels to partake of a bigger, better feed with some of the most notable Irishmen of his time!

## II

AS Martin sat there eating, Mrs. McQuestion entertained him with an autobiographical account. . . Now and then he felt his eyes wandering from accompanying concentration upon the narrative to a girl in bare feet, with a torn dress and dishevelled hair, who was washing plates in a dirty scullery off the kitchen. . . Mrs. McQuestion went on to describe the grand-mannered, lovely girl she herself had been a good many years before, and of how she had been the faithful servant of a crippled lady.

"She left me a few hundred, but, sure, God knows, I had it well earned, slaving for the peevish old thing, night, noon and morning. Then I married himself. A time-keeper in Jacob's he was, and he could drink like a fish, and begad, what d'ye think, but his failing soon began to make big inroads on my little fortune. Then I had to take this little place and keep boarders. Indeed, between struggling one way and another, it was hard enough to keep himself in drink until he died. After he went I never thought of marrying again, for there's only the one marriage. Ah, there's only the one marriage!"

Martin went up to the room that had been allotted to him. It was far up the stairs, and a musty smell seemed to linger about it. Here he opened his little imitation leather portmanteau, and taking his few belongings from it spread them out upon the bed. . . His mother would seem to have expressed a confession

of her love and tenderness in all these little things. . .  
At the bottom of the bag he found a packet of notes which were evidently intended to be used as pocket money. The sight of the money made him feel very lonely. . .

The summer dusk was beginning to creep in around Dublin as he sat there in a trance of thought. He went to the window and saw where the coppery gloom was falling down about the houses. It was that hour wherein the great strength of a city fails and falls down to rest. The wild noises of the day were being replaced by other sounds which denoted a different purpose. A little way down this street was a theatre, and as Martin saw the laughing crowds moving thither there grew upon him a desire to be mingling with his kind upon the street below. At home in Glannanea this need for human companionship had not attacked him to any great extent; he could have remained for ever lonely by the gate watching people pass into Glannidan in the evenings. But now this feeling was different, it was a longing which he could not attempt to deny. . .  
He tied up the notes in his handkerchief and stuck them deep down in his trousers pocket. Then he went downstairs. . .

There was a number of men now greedily munching their tea in the kitchen, men who were speaking in the jargon of the city and expressing little spiritual kinship with him. He surprised Mrs. McQuestion in her description of the "new studio" who had come to her to-day. She was evidently disconcerted by his sudden appearance now, for he did not look at all like the grand young man she had just described. In the immediate opinion of the men at the table he was



merely "a country mug." As he went to the door she came after him and said:

"Now, Mr. Duignan, I hope you'll be back early and that you won't be minding any of the bad flirts you'll be meeting in the street."

"The what?"

"The bad girls that do be prowling about for to ruin fine young fellows with grand futures before them like you."

He felt puzzled by her words as he moved out among the hurrying excited throngs of people. He drifted sullenly along, and now and then was he uplifted almost by a sense of combat. Although it was a week-day everybody appeared to be dressed in Sunday clothes. He saw a great many men who were like the shop-boys who sometimes came to Glannidan from Dublin. They hurried along giggling cant words between them. There were groups of girls, too, who reminded him of those who went walking out of Glannidan in the evenings. . . . But a darker magic seemed to flash from their eyes.

He inquired his whereabouts from a heavy policeman, who told him that he was standing on O'Connell Bridge. . . . As he stood wondering, his hand on the parapet, his eyes were caught by the splendour of the lights reflected in the water. It seemed as if someone had been washing golden vessels in the Liffey. . . . The toneless voice of an old woman with a wide face rang monotonously on his ears: "Wax matches, a penny, wax matches, a penny!" . . . There were great crowds about him and many coloured lights upon the water, and gold and silver spilling out to sea. . . .

Now he was standing before a little theatre whose

name was vaguely familiar. Then he remembered there had been books of the plays that had been performed here among the batches of books his father had brought home with him from Dublin from time to time. Yet were these almost the only books he had been unable to read. In fact they had puzzled him exceedingly. Their characters were peasants like himself, whose woes and torments were his daily round. However could a man bring himself to write of such when he could be thinking instead of the beauty of the world and of dark-eyed girls with ribbons in their hair? . . . Yet, as he stood watching now, he saw rich and grand-looking people drive up to the door of this place. He saw women with bare, gleaming shoulders, and men in evening dress with stiff white fronts which shone beneath the lamps at the entrance to the theatre.

Martin went around the corner and entered the pit. His eyes were immediately held by the continual movement of well-dressed people coming into the stalls of the theatre. . . Dublin was certainly a place of wonder. The lights were suddenly switched off, after the orchestra had played the overture, and he was looking at a scene out of the life he knew. He felt a sudden interest. The words of the characters in the play came to him as had the words of his mother and sister in his own home. And there was a girl in the play who, through the situation in which she was placed, grew to have a certain nobility in keeping with that of the heroines in some of the books he had read. And yet as she stood there, personified by a great actress, on the centre of the stage in her white apron with the bands across her shoulders, she was not at all unlike Lucy Flynn. And the man was like himself, but he did not marry the girl, and this

was the first time he had seen such an ending to any piece of writing.

He did not seem to feel the same crush of power in the crowds as he went home. Mrs. McQuestion was waiting anxiously at the door. . .

## III

IN the morning he met Mr. Cullen in the office. He felt the words tripping queerly on his tongue as he spoke, for the little typist was looking at him with her dark eyes . . . yet at the same moment he felt her slipping out of his mind and he had a notion that she would not return.

Mr. Cullen took his arm and together they moved up a wide staircase. They went into a small class-room near the top of the house.

"Now you are to try these examination tests," said Mr. Cullen; "we want to find out what class you are suited for."

After giving a few further directions he went out of the room and Martin was left alone with all the desks and the maps. It was not at all unlike the little schoolroom of Glannidan. . . There were the papers on the desk before him containing tests in the subjects usually set for the examination for assistants of Excise: arithmetic, geography, history, handwriting, English composition, mathematics. As he turned them over idly he seemed unable to draw any meaning from them, all seemed to mean the same thing, and to mean nothing when all was told. He had only got a smattering of knowledge from a semi-illiterate National teacher, and his schooldays had been short and blanched by the anxiety of the land . . . yet the dogged spirit he had developed from the clay told him it would be a queer thing if he did not make some kind of a show now. Yet it was a fancy that had come out of the books

which arose immediately to sustain him; he began to jot down his thoughts upon one of the subjects which were named for composition, and it was very surprising to see how rapidly they grew into the clear expression of ideas. It seemed curious that in the midst of his inability he should possess this gift. But the writing was laborious for his hand was more used to the plough.

Then one of the white-faced tutors came in to gather up the papers, and Martin gave him a woe-begone look as if in apology for his lack of effort.

"Of course these God-damned things don't matter in the least," said this white-faced young man, "they are only more of Cullen's codology. Young fellow, you'll be sorry you came here, for so far as I can see you'll never, to use a vulgar expression, warm your backside in the Excise."

It was the perfect frankness of this expression of opinion which caused Martin to immediately like this young man. In the office some minutes later the little dark-eyed girl handed him a parcel.

"Your books!" she said.

He took them from her without a word, indeed without even looking at her,

Now began his life in Dublin, this daily passing to and from the Grinder's to the mean lodging-house in the dim region behind Cuffe Street. A curious contrast was immediately to be observed as existing between the regard for him at each place.

In the "College," as he liked to call it, he was meeting men far above him socially, sons of the official class who might some day become district inspectors of police or Indian civil servants. They went in and out of the same class-rooms; they were lectured by the

same tutors; their goal was the goal of the uplifted young man. They nodded to him even when he met them outside the class-rooms. They addressed him as "Duignan" and the tutors addressed him as "Mr. Duignan." He listened to the lectures and found them interesting because they were an unusual experience. He found himself imbibing knowledge rapidly, and could give very creditable answers to any questions which were sprung upon him. Thus was an extravagant estimate formed of his capabilities, and he was credited with qualities which did not rest on any solid foundation. He had made special progress in the subject wherein the fancy had come to him that he could do better than Brian Doyle. His compositions were sometimes read as models of what Mr. Cullen and his labourers, the tutors, could do, to the wondering classes.

But back in his lodgings at Mrs. McQuestion's Martin knew for a certainty the limitations of his own personality. It was the sharp contrast he formed with the other boarders that endowed him with this note of reality. He was descended from a long line of men and women who had drawn their living out of the land, and at home in the clay the fact that he had attempted to question his hereditary destiny had only made him a cockshy for ignorant hatred and scorn. And yet because of all that his residence here had somehow happened, and even here was he the victim of the very same feelings of distrust, especially when he came in from the College, when the little bell above the door clanged and he left his books down on the greasy counter.

"There's the studio!" Mrs. McQuestion would say, and some of the men, bent low over their dinners, would look up at him with a glower, speaking no word. They

were queer, morose men who spoke little to one another or to Martin. It was difficult to make a guess at their occupations, because it was at all times that they went in and out. They formed varying examples of failure in life from a young fellow who spent the time between coughing, reading the sporting newspapers, spitting and smoking "Woodbines," to a very old, quiet man who had that look of wisdom which a man puts on immediately before the end of a long, misspent life. These two would be always sitting in the place that was called the "dining-room," and it was to them that his entrance always afforded the most acute annoyance.

"Where do they be digging them out of?" the old man would say with a laboured asthmatic sneer.

"I dunno the bloody hell!" the younger would reply between his coughs.

"Somebody or another that left a lot of money, and his people not knowing what to do with it they put him on for this job after taking all the other brothers he had from the plough and sending them to Maynooth or All Hallowes!"

Such an expression of opinion to enlighten the wondering couple would often fall from Garrig, a tall, elderly man with a military moustache and a Limerick accent, who sometimes gave a humorous turn to the conversation, not that he was a humorist at all, for he would often say a thing like this:

"May the curse of God alight seventeen times upon the saintly employers of labour in this city, and, furthermore, I'll frighten the life out of you by saying: may the curse of God alight upon the curse of God!"

"Old curse-of-God Garrig, the Socialist," they called him in Mrs. McQuestion's.

Then there was Montgomery, the carpenter, who never worked and was always borrowing "tuppences," which he immediately spent upon pints in Lorcan Murphy's pub across the way. There were two or three bookmaker's clerks who occasionally came home raging drunk from Baldoyle or the Curragh. During periods of prosperity these would spend the day drinking in Lorcan Murphy's pub, and the nights in making furtive attempts to introduce certain ladies into Mrs. McQuestion's house. But she was always too smart for them.

She used to tell, with great gusto, a story of Heidseick, a German baker, who had also tried the same game once upon a time.

"He was the best boarder ever I had, but I caught them in the middle of the night and slung them out on the street, so I did."

Yet, in spite of this vigilance, and the fact that Mrs. McQuestion went to Mass every morning in the Carmelite Church in Aungier Street, life in her house seemed to be a kind of continuous attack upon the decencies. There were times when Martin felt himself slipping so far down into the degradation of it that he longed passionately for the clean, sweet perfume of the bog which stretched away from Glannanea to Ballycullen. . .

Now the days were growing shorter, and the lamps in the streets were lighted earlier. This was a glad time for Martin. He would leave aside his book and his pipe and go to the long window to look down upon the people moving about in the warm lamp-lit haze below. . . His mind would become a blank as he remained there gazing. Unmoved by any impulse, he would feel it moving into harbours of great quiet. . .



This was the hour when Mrs. McQuestion went to the Carmelite Church for evening devotions, and the hour when her boarders had mostly dispersed into the pubs. Yet this was the hour also when the servant girl always employed by Mrs. McQuestion came in to tidy his room. She was a wild half-clad creature, who spoke in the terrible accent of lowest Dublin. Her eyes were always upon Martin, whether she was washing the plates after dinner or making up the beds of an evening.

One evening her eyes were more piercingly upon him as she handled the sheets and pillows. His eyes wandered to the street outside and were upon three girls passing down to the theatre. They were beautiful girls, richly clad. They passed out of sight, and he turned around to look at the girl in the room behind him. There were only the two of them in the quiet room and her lips were richly red. . . Suddenly he turned away from her again to contemplate the street, but now his eyes were clouded. . . He heard her slipping from the room and the patter of her bare feet down the stairs. Something had kept him from her. He turned to the looking-glass and saw himself. Somehow he was not the man who had come away from Glannanea so recently. His appearance was certainly still that of the peasant but the city had changed it. He was shaven now, and spruce as any young man in the city, and he wore a suit of Sunday clothes every day. Yet was it some part of the man who had come away from the clay that had saved him from the penalty of what might have happened just now. . . He had suddenly remembered his sister, Brigid.

He hurried from the house and was soon in a well-lit street where there were numbers of young pretty women

moving about or standing in little groups. They looked at him with soft eyes and some dropped love words which came to his ear. He was not blind to their beauty, but he hurried on in fear.

Soon he was standing before two high-domed buildings with a group of vulgar statuary between them. He saw people move in and out of one of the buildings with bundles of books in their hands. He saw a couple of fellows from "the College" going in and he followed them timidly. This was the National Library of Ireland, they told him, where one might come and read at pleasure. When he entered he saw the bright lights and all the people reading, and the shelves of books and the assistants busy giving out books. He felt very glad that he had discovered this place.

## IV

EVERY evening now, about the hour when Mrs. McQuestion went out to do her devotions, Martin gathered up his note-books and went across to the National Library. There surely was a solace which blotted out the combined torture of the College and of Mrs. McQuestion's house. It was very pleasant to go there and to feel himself being gradually carried away by the dream that came out of all the books. He read every book which struck his fancy, without any regard for any connection they might have with his studies. True he found an increase of intellectual energy through his visits to the Library, and he came to be looked upon as something in the nature of a prodigy by Mr. Cullen and his men. He was a very well-known figure coming into the reading room and passing by the people who assembled in their usual places by the tables every evening. The somewhat ungainly figure of him had already begun to develop the thoughtful stoop of literature. He was fond of sitting down by the side of those whose names he soon learned, by Thomas McDonagh and Padraic Colum, and Sheehy Skeffington and Padraic Pearse.

It was here he entered into the friendship of Séan O'Hanlon. It began one evening that he had asked at the counter for a copy of Mr. Yeats's *Poems*. O'Hanlon immediately sprang into spiritual friendship with him.

"I do a bit of writing myself," he said in a burst

of confidence; "come with me on Sunday and I'll show you a few manuscripts."

Their talks and meetings both inside and outside the Library became frequent, and they went together every Thursday evening to the Tower Theatre, which, strangely enough, Martin had discovered for himself on his very first evening in Dublin. They worked themselves into heated discussions of the plays which were produced there, and O'Hanlon told Martin of the play which he had himself written. It seemed that there was scarcely a young man of their age in Dublin who had not written at least one play of some kind. To Martin it appeared that O'Hanlon's biggest handicaps as a dramatist were his lack of humour and the fact that he knew nothing at all of the Irish peasant. But his enthusiasm was powerful. He had followed the Irish Theatre all round the town, from one small hall to another until it had at last found a permanent habitation in the Tower Theatre. Thus was Martin dragged further and further into the net of literature. Where eventually it might lead him seemed impossible to tell.

He grew critical of the acting at the Tower Theatre. There he saw men work their artistic medium to a nicety as a means of creating laughter or gloom. He listened to the character in each succeeding play, and knew that theirs surely was not the speech of the peasant. It had the ring of the peasant's speech, and retained its turn of beauty, but it was not the speech of the men who went into Glannidan every evening and remained drinking in the gloom of the pubs. . . . He listened to their humour, but it was the humour which comes from flights of the mind and the humour he had known in

Glannanea was something which came most often from a petty satisfaction of some low spite when one man got the better of another through the exercise of a little animal cunning. It was seldom that anyone laughed in Glannidan, but they were always grinning. He saw the tragedies wherein one man or woman was made to possess a little nobility of soul and he felt that this was really a lie for in that part of Ireland that he knew he had never experienced such a thing. In one of their walks from the theatre, after which they usually remained far into the night wandering up and down Grafton Street among the groups of soft-eyed women, he spoke of this to O'Hanlon, who sought to uplift his mind from such sordid realities by the creation of romantic visions for the enjoyment of his mind. . . He laughed loudly when O'Hanlon told him that there were people who believed that the Tower has been too hard on Ireland.

He began to seek the reflex of his dreams of beauty in the life around him. He sought it on his walks across St. Stephen's Green in the mornings, when the water was still clean beneath the ducks and the dew still bright upon the flowers. He sought it in the picture galleries of Dublin, where he would often remain gazing for a long time upon a picture of nude beauty. . . But turning from these things which were half lifeless, half meaningless, his unquiet soul sought it in the reality of the half wild girl who came every evening at dusk to tidy his room.

More than ever did he seek it in the Library where at the behest of O'Hanlon he read the poetry of Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson and studied the art of Aubrey Beardsley. . . He grew to have a longing to

write something, and more often was he occupied now in the Library of evenings with a sheet of foolscap, not always the same sheet, however, to which he was endeavouring to transfer his vision of life. . . He dreamt of being some day of the company of those Irish writers of his own time whom he often saw so busily engaged over sheets of manuscript. . . He had begun in rivalry of Brian Doyle, the fellow who was looked upon as a writer in Glannidan. Séan O'Hanlon sometimes laughed at his efforts now, more often was he held by the power of some striking and original phrase: . . .

"You have the roots of the matter in you, Duignan," he said one evening, "but these little snatches are but the filaments of the dream. They are distinguished by an attempt to attain beauty through a certain coarseness of thought. You would have to live the peasant out of yourself, I fancy, before you could hope to be remembered among the elect of these shelves. However you have life before you, and your handling of life might make a writer of you in the end. Yet, it might be better on the whole if you did not permit the dream to spoil your life."

However, it was the dream that had taken possession of Martin's soul. As he moved in and out of the College he was no part at all of the business of that place. He was one whose eyes were fixed upon the distant summits. He had used what pocket money remained in his possession to still further correct the peasant in his appearance until now, in his neat grey suit, he looked not at all unlike a city-bred young man. . . Then something happened. They held a general class examination at the College, and Martin cut a sorry

figure when the results came out. Mr. Cullen came up to him, his little red eyes aflame behind his glasses and his beard looking remarkably fierce.

"What the hell have you been doing with your time or is this a damned piece of tomfoolery?" he said, rustling the papers in Martin's eyes.

"I thought you knew, that being your business," said Martin, quietly.

"Well, Mr. Duignan, *avic*, wait till you see what will happen when your guardian, Father Clarke, hears of this idleness or villainy, or whatever it is. I have already written him."

So far had Martin advanced in the mood of the dreamer that he hardly seemed to hear the words which were being addressed to him, but this connection of Father Clarke with this circumstance of his life recalled him to remembrance of Glannidan. . . That evening when he went to the National Library he piled his table with those books which usually brought him interest and excitement, but soon found that neither feeling would descend upon him. There was no performance at the Tower Theatre this evening to which he might go and fall to thinking as he sat looking vacantly at some peasant play wherein some effeminate actor was endeavouring to impersonate some character he knew well in the flesh in Glannidan and Glannanea, how he would like to jump upon the stage and, better suited as he was in knowledge, temperament, and build of body, give the character its perfect interpretation. So he returned to Mrs. McQuestion's and fell into chat with Montgomery, the carpenter, and Garrig, the Socialist, who were standing just inside the window, their heads bent low upon their chests, looking out at

a smoky drizzle which hung gloomily over the muddy street. Not a word was passing between them. Like statues so immovable were they, each sunk to the chin in his own separate hell. He went into the kitchen where the smell of the miscellaneous cheap food was heavy in the air. It was a curious stink in which he felt himself unconsciously searching for what constituent was uppermost. The half clad girl was in the scullery washing up the tea things. He sank down wearily on the old, springless sofa behind the table, and she gave him a burning smile as she wrung the dish cloth. . . But his mind was back again this evening among the boreens and by the old gate with Lucy Flynn. . . Curious, he thought, what an enormous change the city had already effected in him. . .

The girl put on her shawl and moved close to him as she went to pass out. He looked up from his thinking and their eyes met. She dallied about the kitchen as he yawned and moved towards the door which led upstairs.

"Where's Mrs. McQuestion?" he said.

"She's away over doing the indulgence, sir; you know, sir, this is the last evening; she won't be in for ages yet, for she's awful fond of praying."

It was the first time that either had spoken so many words to the other, and both seemed to feel relieved that the dumbness of desire had at last been ended.

In the morning there was a letter awaiting him on the greasy table from Father Clarke. It told, with its laboured periods almost of a parish priest's letter to the papers, how in accordance with a communication from Mr. Cullen it had been decided to withdraw him



from the College, or at least to withdraw the money that was keeping him there.

"And all the money that is after being spent on you," the letter went on, "and your poor mother and all, and your sister after being married to Jamesey Cassels and she in a delicate state of health already. Indeed you ought to be ashamed of yourself and you nearly three months in college."

After moping about in a condition of empty bewilderment all day he turned that night towards the Tower Theatre.

## V

FROM his enthusiasm for the Tower Theatre and its plays the present expedition had emerged. He had made a careful study of the way in which Irish peasants were portrayed at the Tower until the fancy had grown on him that he could play such parts probably better than these actors. And seeing that they relied upon their very lack of technical accomplishment for the best part of their reputation his lack of working knowledge of the theatre could not prove a very serious handicap. So, just as the darkness was beginning to creep in around Dublin, he turned his steps towards the Tower Theatre. By the circuitous way of various dirty back streets did he go until he found himself at length standing outside the stage door. As he drew near he saw that the fanlight was illuminated, and this fact told him that although it was a night upon which no performance was taking place the theatre was inhabited. For about twenty minutes he walked and re-walked the narrow footpath by the door with extraordinary feelings of uncertainty jumping through his mind. . . Then, urged by a fateful impulse, he pushed the bell.

The stage door was opened by a lady who might be one of the actresses, he thought, so nervous did her imperious manner make him. Martin was left to close the door. Half afraid he moved very slowly down a short stairway. The darkness of the place seemed to hold gloomy foreshadowings of this new and mysterious kind of life into which he was deliberately walking.

His nostrils were assailed by a cave-like smell, and he saw what he took to be stage properties suspended from the roof, and miscellaneous things which made attempts to reach them from the ground like stalagmites and stalactities.

Martin made an enquiry for the stage manager, whom he considered to be the proper man to see, and soon that person appeared switching on the light as he came. In the sudden light he appeared spectral. His head was little and oldish, but he had the light body of a boy. He began to evince a kind of mechanical stage smile as Martin set out to recognise in him the stage manager of the Tower Theatre. He said his name was Mr. Lawlor. There was a kind of condescension in his tones as he chose certain moments in which to speak.

"So you wish to become a member of the Tower Company?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, you must see Mr. Leonard Thompson, who has all to do with the artistic side of the management. Come this way!"

Together they ascended the steep, straight stairs to the office. The mind of Martin was really agitated so near was he now to the presence of one whom he had always taken to be a very great man. Mr. Leonard Thompson, playwright and manager of the Tower Theatre, was seated at his desk. To Martin he appeared as another young, old man. When he rose from his chair he looked most wondrously tall and spare of build. His eyebrows grew in a peculiar way which seemed to give him an expression of constant and intense surprise. This, combined with a certain delicate and apologetic method of movement, communicated the

impression that he was surprised by the very fact of his own existence. Mr. Lawlor introduced Martin to Mr. Leonard Thompson and then very silently slipped out of the office upon his rubber heels, and Mr. Thompson displayed an air of excessive boredom as he waited for Martin to make known his business.

"I have called to know if you could find a job for me in the Tower Theatre."

Mr. Thompson continued remote as he glanced over some typewritten sheets in his hand.

"A job!" he at last plucked up courage to question, "a job as an actor?"

"Yes, a job as an actor," affirmed Martin.

By way of comment or reply Mr. Thompson made an unaccountable noise which Martin imagined must be his clever although curious conception of laughter. Then he said:

"You are probably aware that we here are different from other theatres."

Martin nodded and said that he was aware of this.

"Our players," proceeded the manager, "fit so perfectly into our plays. As a matter of fact they are specially constructed for the plays and the plays specially constructed for them. Take the case of a certain person for example, who writes by far the most of the plays we produce here. He is quite unable to write a line of his lines without a constant manipulation in his mind of the character who is destined to deliver it—I mean the line. From the very moment of its conception the dramatically contrived personality of the character is identified with the established personality of the player. Furthermore, a physical correspondence is instituted. If the player possesses a lisp

it must be shown that as a result of a black curse or some other piece of fatalism the corresponding character in the play was born lisping; if he be small the stature of the character must be reduced to correspond. You may probably marvel at the detail of this person for he is marvellously attentive to detail. The most interesting arrangement, invented by him and perfected by me is one of the secrets of our phenomenal success as an Art Theatre. I assure you we have gone one better than the Greeks. They were frightfully keen on the unities of place and time: we pin our faith to the unity of identity. This is, as I have already explained, the artistic mergence of the player's personality in the personality of the character he is supposed to embody."

This quiet flow of persuasive eloquence was fast convincing Martin in the opinion he had always held of this great young man. But Mr. Thompson had not yet concluded.

"Now, Duignan" (the sudden familiarity was amazing) "I look upon you as splendid material for a peasant player. That Irish face of yours with the addition of some artificial side-whiskers would make you in London or anywhere the typical Irishman—the Irish Paddy so dear to the political cartoonist of my childhood days. Also you have the agricultural, uncouth swing, and the rich, melancholy Celtic voice changing to a perfectly natural and vulgar brogue. In fact, so far as the Tower Theatre is concerned, you are 'the business.'"

Martin felt almost confused by these compliments. He had found it so very easy after all his foolish fears to become a member of the Tower Company.

"We have here the manuscript of a new play which

we intend to produce in a few weeks' time. It is a Cork play, and you know what Cork plays are."

Martin said he knew.

"Well, in this play, *The End of Edward Corrigan*, a certain part occurs, that of a heavy, loutish drunkard, which would suit you better than any man I ever knew."

Martin smiled because of the compliment and the anticipation.

"I admire your eagerness to take up this part, but we observe a certain slight formality here in the Tower. It is an examination in the reading of this test as we call it, about which a certain person is most particular."

Martin looked at the typewritten sheet which Mr. Thompson handed to him. It appeared just like the well-known "Advice to Playwrights submitting plays to the Tower Theatre," and was a list of phrases prevalent in Tower Theatre plays.

"Now you must read these phrases aloud for me, giving particular attention to the intonation" said Mr. Thompson, with a kind of aged concern strangely alien in so young a man.

Martin, in his eagerness, at once began to read:

"And she a woman with a big tongue on her a yard long, that does be always prattling."

"It's what I do be always thinking, lady of the house, if only you'd let a man in to stop along with you."

"It's a quare world, and a dark night, surely. God help us all!"

"It's what I do be thinking, and it's what I do be saying."

"Would you say him now to be in any way cracked or wrong in the head?"

"No bloody fear!"

"Ah indade I'm not. A'm going for a wee dandher down Sandy Row."

"For I have sucked its sorrows' sap out of the moon."

"Say, kid, this is a rotten town."

"All those gods whom their swarthy servant, Time, hath not yet slain."

"That will do," said the manager. "Your rendering is in every way uniquely perfect. Allow me to congratulate you already as a worker in our midst."

"I may, then, consider myself engaged," ventured Martin.

"You may begin to congratulate yourself on the honour that is about to be conferred upon you—the honour of permission to appear in the public performance of a Tower Play with our famous players. Of course, I would have you know that jobs with their detestable pecuniary rewards as understood in the world of business are quite unknown amongst us. We're artists."

The last word of his speech seemed to hold a peculiar fascination as it fell from the thin lips of the manager, who stood there drooped artistically above his desk like some wan flower at the close of the day. Martin took the square, crackling sheets, which constituted his part in *The End of Edward Corrigan*. It was a longish, difficult-looking part. . . The manager must have been strongly convinced by his rendering of the test lines. . . But of a sudden the peasant had come back to life in him. What was an artist? Was he a strange being, different from the human species who did not feed or clothe himself or need a place whereon to lay his head. . . The subtle, psychological manager

seemed to glimpse what was passing through his mind so he spoke abruptly:

"The call is for eleven in the morning when you must attend to be formally introduced to your future colleagues. Also we then start work upon rehearsals of *The End of Edward Corrigan*."

So saying he put on his great hat of literature and moved towards the door of the office. Martin followed respectfully behind, and they went down the steep stairs. As they went past the open door of the Green Room the new actor of the Tower Theatre had a momentary impression of long-haired, brilliant men and vain, splendid women. Their gay chatter flowed out and beat upon the quiet stillness which reigned amid the stalagmites and stalactites. . . Mr. Leonard Thompson led the way into the clear night air. They spoke little, and in a few minutes were in O'Connell Street. It was deserted, and they parted amid its silence. Martin glanced back just once and had a quick glimpse of the manager of the Tower Theatre, darkly silhouetted against the lamp-light. The spare figure of him grew more and more shadowy as he went swinging his stick across the bridge and down Westmoreland Street.



## VI

A FEW mornings later, as he went out without his accustomed bundle of books, Mrs. McQuestion called to him and said:

"Is it true that you've got a job?"

"Yes," he said, very quietly.

"Look at that, now!" went on the landlady. "Sure and I always knew you'd have luck. I used to say a little prayer for you every evening in the chapel."

He turned away from the grime of his dwelling-place and was soon in Grafton Street. He had already purchased a cane with which he tapped nonchalantly upon the edge of the sidewalk in imitation of a mannerism of Albert Donohoe, the leading actor of the Tower.

It was certainly a curious experience for him who had for so long been a part of God's reality among the ploughed fields with the sun and the wide sky over them to be coming into this place of artificiality every morning to be trained how to act the part of a peasant, which he really was. Mr. Leonard Thompson spent much time in telling him just exactly how to speak this speech and that in the most approved Tower fashion, and Mr. Leonard Thompson, with his thin, spidery figure and pale romantic face always appeared very remote from the clay.

*The End of Edward Corrigan* gave scope for a certain amount of forcible impersonation on his part. Many an evening in Glannanea as he had leaned across the road gate lifting his eye occasionally to look at the

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drunkards hurrying into Glannidan he had to a certain extent entered into their longing, although he had never really become one of them. For he knew the tortures which drove them to blot from their minds in the black flow of porter the blind agony which came out of the clay. His sister and Austin Fagan! It was the curious extension of that sad thing that had brought him to the Tower Theatre. Now it was the remembrance of his passion on that day in Glannidan Board-room that was enabling him to interpret this part in this play. Thus had he already begun to make art out of his life after the fashion that had been partially suggested to him by Séan O'Hanlon. He was rapidly surprising even Mr. Leonard Thompson.

"I say, Duignan, the way you let these 'blasts' and 'bloodys' out of your mouth is simply magnificent. Your performance as a porter drunkard is unique. Hitherto the drunkards of the stage were supposed to have produced their condition with wine or whiskey, but you are the first porter drunkard. That's right, allow yourself to dribble a little, as if you were about to vomit, and as you make your big exit lurch forward a little so as to communicate to the audience the effect of vomit which takes place just outside the door. That will be awfully good, and ought to please a certain person immensely. For a writer of peasant romance he has a surprising grasp of the essentials of realism. Do you know what he said to me the other day?"

Mr. Leonard Thompson here laughed one of his long, peculiar laughs.

"We were rehearsing Barney Shaw's cowboy play, you know," when he said:

"I don't doubt but that Albert Donohoe and

the rest of them will make up all right in this curious little lapse of poor old Shaw's. They will be gotten-up according to the best ideas of the cinema in the togs that are supposed to be fashionable with those supposed cowboys in those supposed parts of America. Of course no such thing really exists, and I don't see why we should make this move to emulate the picture palace. We who have maintained a continuous procession of strange peasants across this stage should endeavour to give an unique reading. The cowboy represents the romance of America; the Tower peasant is our romance. To institute a combination of both might well be considered a stroke of genius. What would you say now to making our cinema-clad actors spit out as they take their places in the jury box?"

A burst of his queer merriment again took possession of Mr. Leonard Thompson, but Martin remained blinking stupidly in quest of the point of the joke. . . He had a sudden glimpse of the dirty evening crowd in the widow Kelly's pub. . .


"But in the girls' face?" he said, hopelessly, snatching at a scruple which might remove from his imagination this pictured indignity to a lady. Mr. Leonard Thompson now became completely excruciated.

It was even thus that many a morning would pass, and there were moments when Martin had qualms as to the loss of time which all this stupid rehearsing seemed. The salary he got for playing the part of the peasant at the Tower was very little by the side of what he might make by playing the part of the peasant in reality. His reading of the part that had been given him in *The End of Edward Corrigan* was the in-

evitable outcome of certain circumstances in his life and was successful beyond even his own expectations. . . . Yet did there seem to be some mighty power sneering at him just as they sneered in Glannidan whenever one attempted to do anything which placed him beyond them. He could always imagine that the crowd who loafed outside the widow Kelly's after closing time would sneer at him in this way if they saw him now. . . .

But in these days Séan O'Hanlon proved a good friend. He kept alive in Martin that rich and fine enthusiasm which might otherwise have perished in these circumstances. He spoke in lofty words of the nobility of the drama: he induced him to read Ibsen, Strindberg and Maeterlinck, and strove to surround him even in the Library with an atmosphere of the theatre and of art. Yet in spite of all this attention the interest of Martin was gradually waning. This was not life, and the strength of the clay would be continually surging up in his veins urging him to primitive combat. Often on Sundays when he went walking up to the hills with O'Hanlon he could feel himself descending from his dream to talk quite naturally of the land, often falling dangerously near the level which was continually maintained by those who went along the boreens of an evening and into Glannidan. O'Hanlon would be depressed by this change in his friend and not a word would pass between them as they came back into Dublin by way of Dundrum.

It was the night of the first production of *The End of Edward Corrigan*, and Martin was playing his part. It might be more truly said that he was



appearing as himself, the self that might have emerged eventually had he fallen into the life of Glannidan. . . . He was already filled by the joyous comfort of applause. He could feel that he had made a success of his first part in the Tower Theatre, and when the play was over he saw the author come up to speak to him. . . . But the applause which greeted his appearance in response to the call of "Author! Author!" had left the young man speechless. His hand was limp as he shook Martin's hand. . . .

A little later as he went up the stairway to his dressing-room he met Ellen O'Connor, a girl who had joined the Tower Company even as he had joined it, only a day or two before. For a few minutes she stood there complimenting him in the dusk of the stairway. There seemed to be a blessed tenderness in her words as she praised his playing.

## VII

THE players had all gone to their dressing-rooms to remove their make-up. From the office one could hear the jingle of the counters as the manager ran them out of the long, tin box in which they had been collected. The little noise was continuous and exciting, but it soon subsided or was lost in a milder kind of noise—the counting of money. Then the office door was closed with a business-like slam. By this time Martin had removed his stage appearance and, coming out of his dressing-room, he collided with the stage carpenter, who was also electrician and night-watchman, now going about ostentatiously, closing all the doors and putting out all the lights in the Tower Theatre.

Now into the room they called the Green Room, where a gas stove gave an air of comfort and homeliness, came all the gods of the Tower Theatre—Mrs. Comasky, the charwoman, was getting tea for them down at another gas stove in the scene-dock. First came Mr. Leonard Thompson. He threw himself with an air of extreme weariness into a comfortable chair by the fire and his long legs sprawled menacingly over half the floor. The others, the girls and the rest, crowded in from the dressing-rooms. Mr. Leonard Thompson allowed his gaze to wander away and remain fixed upon some matter in his mind which he saw reflected in the odorous flame. . . His excessive remoteness would seem to proclaim the possession of personality. Around him arose the gabble of the others. They talked of

where they had got their laughs and how, the bits of the play that had "gone" and the bits that had not "gone." . . . They had seen Sir Horace Plunkett and George Russell in the first row of the stalls. . .

Then the conversation suddenly put on an aspect of brilliance. One of the actors, out of his talk, began to develop his favourite theory of stage production. It was in turn attacked and commended by those around and so the conversation ran rapidly down many a bye-way of cleverness. . . There was a girl who laughed, now and then; a girl with dark eyes and hair the colour of oak-bark who had often played the part of a queen. . . . Her laughter was like that of no other woman that Martin had ever heard. It was mirthful certainly, seeing that it sprang out of her enjoyment of the chat, yet it seemed, somehow, to hold a tragic ring as if the dead queens who had been hurried through great dooms had given some of themselves to her personality even as she played them. . . In this place she was possessed of a certain majesty which was in such rich contrast to the poor, timid figure that Ellen O'Connor cut as she sat like a little hunted bird upon the chintz-covered sofa furthest from the gas stove. . . The sudden brilliance of this place would seem to have crushed her, and besides she had merely "come on" with the crowd in *The End of Edward Corrigan*. . .

Yet, even in this moment Martin felt that it was through the misty veil of the impression already made upon him by this girl that he would see the Tower in the reality it stood for in his own life and in the life of the Ireland of his time. His mind must gradually move to a vision very different from that of Mr. George Moore although there were bits of *Ave, Salve, Vale*

which already appeared to him, in the light of the experience he was rapidly gathering, very brilliant and very true. . .

But there was Ellen, a small personality very probably, to think of as lighting any man's life towards a lofty regard. Yet, why was she here and why was he here? Why only because this movement which had sprung like a magic flame around a great personality was something powerful and compelling in the life of their country, and both she and he had answered to its impulse. Here surely was a thing of beauty and of permanence which would endure past the petty tumults and the ignoble dooms of successive political parties, no matter how greatly clamorous they might be in mean moments of violent triumph. It was queer to think how each of them in turn claimed to be the representatives of Ireland, and the very cleanest products of their nationality. Yet here was something more nobly representative, cleaner, more intense and spiritual, whose idols were not of clay but of bronze. . . And out of all their prate no solid achievement like this had come. In a brilliant, ironic moment it seemed particularly meet to Martin that a theatre, a place for play-acting, was the only reality that had come out of all the play-acting of Ireland. . . They had never reached the old house in College Green wherein they might express themselves in eloquent periods for the admiration of a wondering world. It was in this place after all that they had been truly expressed, the roots of them heroically in the old Gaelic civilization and the poor seed they had run to to-day in a once lovely garden that had gone back to the wild. Here in tragedy, comedy, farce, through all these variations of a noble



art the breed of them had been shown at the bidding of a master hand. And it might be that it was through this commingled exemplification a perfect form of National life would come to be at length determined and that all the other attempts would collectively make the subject for a tremendous farce to be played here, all Ireland, intellectually emancipated, its enthusiastic audience. . . That would be a great play and a great night, surely, God help us all!

Martin felt himself wondering for a moment whether Ellen O'Connor's movement with the impulse that had gathered him to its wild breast had been coloured by any of these thoughts. . . But there was the manager merely bored amid the smoke from his cigarette. . .

Just then the door of the Green Room opened and a tall, dark man came into the midst of the little crowd. He surveyed the accustomed scene, with a lifted, almost grandiose expression. . . His hands were solemnly knotted behind him. No one moved excepting the manager, who seemed to stir out of his trance. A few words upon a matter of business passed quietly between the two tall men.

Then entered the others whom George Moore might have written about very cleverly in *Hail and Farewell*. First came a certain person followed eagerly by a member of the Bureaucracy in Ireland, a minor poet and an American journalist. The fame of his plays was manifest in the appearance of a certain person. The member of the Bureaucracy as an international figure needed no description. The minor poet was a mere caricature in his verse as in his person of the tall, dark man. He now began to read a scrap of verse he had recently written on the back of an envelope,

and the other considering all Dublin verse to be a sincere flattery of himself listened passively, the noise of the thing sounding in the mystical distance. . . The minor poet's lines had the effect of lifting him out of his dark humour and he laughed heartily as the American journalist manifested himself, note-book in hand. He was one of the almost innumerable Americans who had written books on the Tower Theatre. This was how such books came to be written. A little hard-faced, insignificant-looking man occurred like this in the most inoffensive, apologetic way. He went prying about with a note-book in his hand, listening as it were at keyholes with the note-book in his hand. One scarcely noticed the little man at it until in his surprising American way he came into the possession of more knowledge of the institution than anybody connected with the Tower Theatre. Then the book appeared, a detailed compendium giving the inner history of every single play. It threw a powerful searchlight upon the activities of everyone connected with literature in Ireland, and the funny little man made a lot of money out of it. The literary people liked the compilers of such books immensely for they would seem to have been sent into the world for no other reason than that no man might ever be able to escape the knowledge that there were "great writers" in Ireland.

The member of the Bureaucracy and the minor poet drifted back to a certain person. The poet began to beg of him to accept a play for the Tower. He put the poet off with a joke, but it was not so funny although the reasons for the subconscious rivalry were perfectly obvious. Both were peasant romancists. He might

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have been successful had he been a Cork realist or Bernard Shaw.

The actors and the rest had sunk into insignificance. It all appeared very futile as a part of life suddenly leaping up to overshadow Martin's vision of the Tower, futilities flowed in upon futilities until all the people in the Green Room were enveloped. Their heads were bobbing up and down like corks upon the sea of futility that life had caused to flow in around them. . . .

So it appeared to Ellen O'Connor and Martin Duignan, who sat apart, she very timid and very silent, he rebellious, passionate, wildly wrathful that life should always show its immediate strength even as in Glannidan and Glannanea.

Her eyes sought his. Until to-night they had never spoken, when she had stopped on the stair to congratulate him, and now their minds were working into the most wonderful sympathy with one another. Perhaps both had dreamt of Art as a way of breaking the mean bonds of Life, but in this place of Art they now felt bonds which cut deeper into the mind. Life seemed a hard thing to be rid of without the doom of the grave.

Upon the wall, just by the telephone, was a pencil sketch of a writer, a really great writer who had given of himself to all the power and beauty the Tower had created. Ellen glanced from the portrait of the man who had written the wild sweet words to the face of Martin. He had the same strong face, the same dark hair. Both men had affinities with the peasant.

Even though their chat upon the stairs had been a short one he had managed to tell her how he dreamt of writing truly of the peasant some day. "I shall be the first real peasant author," he had said. After her

hard day of toil in that wretched drapery establishment in George's Street she had read a great deal, and so had fine sympathy now with this young man who had spoken of writing. She had always fancied an author as a man apart from life—a kind of God-like man. It was such a brave thing too to think of catching the crooked, grinning fabric of life and remoulding it nearer to the heart's plan. . . Her eyes sought his again. . . She began to have the most extraordinary fancies. . .

Now there seemed to be just only the two of them in this room of art and beauty, of mirth and loveliness in the Tower Theatre, while slowly beyond the misty outlines of the others, sheer from the clay, seemed to rise the figure of a tall, dark man in bronze who had written great lines of love for Kathleen-ni-Houlihan.

## VIII

HE loved to hear Ellen murmur her praise of his ideas as they went walking together across Dublin after their nights at the Tower. In her company he began to hear the definite voice of that ambition which had already come to him only dumbly. It grew to seem more curious to his own mind that his thought should have shaped itself so definitely; he who had so recently come away from the clay had already uplifted himself. There were many nights when Dublin seemed to hold a hundred glimpses of Fairyland. . .

Then he wandered into the acquaintance of Phelim O'Brien, the poet. Having mistaken him, as well anyone might, for the bronze figure of the Tower, he went up to speak to him upon some matter of business in the vestibule of the theatre. The poet did not appear quite flattered by the mistake that Martin had made. Later in the evening they met just outside the theatre and walked into O'Connell Street together. Phelim O'Brien would seem to have carefully copied the appearance of the great poet, the soft, wavy hat of black, the green, romantic overcoat, and all the personal glamour of the other man. Even before they reached O'Connell Street he had withered with contemptuous criticism both a certain person as a dramatist and the great poet as a poet. Then he began to speak of himself and of his own work.

"Come in here!" he said, stopping suddenly outside the door of a rather dilapidated public-house. "This is the Daffodils." Martin had a glimpse of lacquered vases with daffodils in them filling all the window.

"It was I who discovered this pub. One day as I moped here in search of the last line of a sonnet, I spotted the daffodils, but then only a dirty pint tumblerful of them in the window. It was a windy day in April, with a lofty, rolling sky! Wordsworth! I shouted in sheer delight; then the last line of my sonnet came to me and I went into the pub to celebrate. I made a suggestion to the proprietor. He seemed flattered. A Parisian café of a dirty Dublin public-house! It was an amazing conception. But here you are, the result, little marble-topped tables and daffodils always in the window, artificial daffodils, of course, for no natural flower I ever heard of could bloom in this atmosphere."

The reek of porter assailed them as they entered. It seemed a queer place for a poet to be going. The drink he called for had a queer name, but as it did not sound like any of the drinks Martin had ever heard in Glannidan he thought that necessarily it must be harmless. Although he knew no French, he thought that it had a French sound somehow. Phelim O'Brien looked around and appeared disappointed to see the place so deserted. But immediately he revived his own interest in himself.

"This is where I have written most of my books. Of course, now that I think of it, it's too many bloody books I have written. I have flooded the market against myself."

Martin smiled, for now it seemed that a book was only a small thing, a kind of effort that a man might throw off every week or two. It did not now appear as a solid and great achievement. . . It might be very humble too, for, as they parted some hours later, after

they had passed and re-passed through the groups in Grafton Street, Phelim O'Brien spoke with a kind of wistful intimacy of a mean street. . . . Martin remembered all he had read of impecunious authors. He too was of the same condition, and although he could not as yet be described as an author, he lived not far from this very street. He made an appointment with O'Brien at "The Daffodils" next day.

"You'll meet me there," said O'Brien at parting, "and I'll introduce you to some of the choicest spirits of the age. I may be able to put you in the way of getting a bit of copy, that is, if you're engaged upon a novel or anything. By the look of you I should say that it is a novel. You may as well know now that no man is allowed into our circle unless he has written a book or has a book in 'the making.'"

Next day in the afternoon they met in "The Daffodils." The dark pub was full of queer-looking men, sitting around the greasy, marble-topped tables drinking bottled stout. Phelim O'Brien described them in whispers to Martin. . . . Their talk as it came to him, in almost blasphemous snatches, was of books and books.

"This kind of thing goes on all day in 'The Daffodils,' and when these are not here their places are taken by brothers of the craft of criticism. Criticism was almost a lost art in Dublin until they arose. Now any day and all day you may here hear a valuation and a transvaluation of the literature of our time. Not a man amongst them but has a book in the making, verse, a novel, a critical study, a play. I am the only published author, consequently they have a kind of mingled envy and respect for me."

Phelim and Martin soon joined the crowd, and immediately what might have emerged as Martin's estimate of "The Daffodils" was made shapeless by talk. One by one they attacked every writer of the day, the great poet of the Tower coming in for a most determined disembowelling on all sides. . . The symposium rose and fell upon successive waves of bottled stout. Phelim O'Brien grew more silent as he grew more pleased. The annihilation of all other authors stood for his magnification. He seemed to sit very still. . . Then he fell down off the high stool and there was loud lamenting as to whether he had killed himself. . . One by one these men who had spent the brightness of the day in criticism of those who sought to find the beauty of the world passed out drunkenly into the dusk. . . And as each pilgrim passed there was a momentary silhouette of a nodding plume beside a bobbing head upon the frosted window glass of "The Daffodils."



## IX

**T**O this queer place now came Martin as often as he had money to spare, for money was a necessity even among the Olympian Fields of "The Daffodils." The "writers" of this Dublin decadence were none of them rich men although there were queer stories told of enormous sums that Phelim O'Brien had got for work he had sent to America. Many drinks were stood to Phelim on the strength of these stories. A night that such a story had gained stronger currency than usual would be a big night in the life of Phelim O'Brien, and he would leave the place immensely drunk. Next day all the great story would begin to dwindle and crumble and to appear suddenly as fabulous as any story of a legacy that had ever come from America. The fading of Phelim's fortune was as pathetic as the fading of a dream, and, amid the gloom of it, surrounded by his friends of "The Daffodils," he appeared almost a figure of tragedy, his head bent low upon his chest, and nothing save a great depression in the appearance of him. . . The whole scene would swim queerly before the vision of Martin, and again he would see the drunkards drowning their sorrow in the widow Kelly's pub in Glannidan over the death of a beast. . . Often he came here as if to enter into mourning thus for some part of himself that had died. . . And there was little doubt but that the beast had leaped to life in him here and more and more often he watched the window when the women with the plumes would be coming by. . . He seemed to have moved out of

that world wherein lived such saints as Séan O'Hanlon. It was through this idealist he had glimpsed the beauty wherein great literature could be made too, and a man might make a thing of beauty out of his life. At the instigation of O'Hanlon he had read the poems of Padraic Pearse, Thomas McDonagh, and Alice Milligan whom he saw so often writing in the Library. And in his talks with Ellen O'Connor, too, on their way across the lamplit streets of Dublin after nights in the Tower, he had glimpses of the same shining hills. Both had moved up from the poor life of the clay to association with literature through the Tower. It was an influence in both their lives, although the working of the influence was in strangely contrasted ways. It was leading her far above life into a romantic way of thought, him down into life as if in search of a mode of expression, too, among the people of "The Daffodils," who were often blinded to all beauty. They seemed to set great store by drink as an essential in giving a man breadth of outlook, vision, as they put it, and this obsession was particularly unfortunate in the case of Martin where there was more than a trace of hereditary craving. . . . It was quite possible that his father, Arthur Duignan, during his famous visits to Dublin had spent long hours in some such pub, talking of books, with men who wore Dundreary whiskers and drinking bottled stout until the day had faded and the plumes had begun to pass by some such window. . . . Yet still for love of Ellen there came grand thoughts both here in "The Daffodils" and in the Library which built up a fine piece of dreaming. . . . Very often, too, in the vacant spaces of their night at the Tower he would tell her of the novel he was writing. But

so far, in reality there was no novel at all. He was merely writing a story with his life, a story which might never come to be read. Once she suggested how all this time he was spending at the Tower was such waste. Their economy had been perfectly phrased by Mr. Leonard Thompson—they were artists. Often when he sat in "The Daffodils" taking a cheese sandwich and a bottle of stout, which formed his usual luncheon, he would become fully convinced of the dismal reality of his life. He would stand up and look at himself in the glass advertisements in a self-pitying way. The dapper appearance he had begun to cultivate when he first came to the Tower had somehow disappeared. His coat looked seedy, his trousers, to use an expression of "The Daffodils," had already begun to resemble "the bearded breeches of the bard," his felt hat was fading out of shape and his tie was frayed. . . . When he sat down again he felt that he was humped heavily in his seat. He was ever more and more like some evening loafer in the widow Kelly's. It seemed very difficult to fancy him as a Bohemian in a Parisian café.

However, it was when he spoke that the difference in him became manifest. He talked with an easy grace acquired from association with the gods of the Tower Theatre and the companionship of Phelim O'Brien. He now possessed that full charm of manner which comes to the poet at some period of his life, the something of magical personality that wins the beloved and hence helps to create the image of beauty in his poems. Thus was he in different aspects outwardly to the crowd in "The Daffodils," to Ellen O'Connor, and even to all the others at the Tower. Yet, inwardly, he knew himself to be no poet at all, but merely one who wore

the wings of a lost spirit fluttering around the flame that must eventually burn him. Already was he scorched by the breath of hell. . .

One night he came out to the door of "The Daffodils" and stood for a while on the pavement. A girl of striking carriage came by. She passed and re-passed him where he stood. He saw at once that she belonged to the class which is swung perilously between the stage and the streets. . . In a moment they were speaking of life and love and literature and passion as they went on through the crowds. He did not seem to feel the passing of time until they were walking some of the pleasant lanes around Dundrum. Some new rich spirit of adventure in his life seemed to hurry them along. Like two figures out of a realistic dream or a tragedy by Maeterlinck they crossed a grassy, starlit field.

END OF BOOK II



**BOOK III**  
**THE PAGAN**



## BOOK III

## THE PAGAN

## I

HE spent the greater part of next day in the National Library. He had been given a pretty large part in a new play and the Library was the place where he usually went to memorise his lines. . . But the weariness of the world was already upon him and he turned from his work to write to Kitty Haymer, the girl of the night that had just passed into this clouded day. . . . And to-day he was a different man. Séan O'Hanlon thought surely that the glory of poetry had descended upon him as he sat writing in the Library. He seemed suddenly akin to all the poets who came there to write, to McDonagh and Pearse and Padraic Colum. Yet was he putting something of evil into this letter, something that pleased him, not as the equal in genius, but as the imitator in mannerism of Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, and lesser writers of *The Yellow Book*. The curtains of his mind had changed from the golden haze of poetry to this yellow dream. He thought of the vase of withering daffodils in the pub of literature. In his eyes these grew to have an evil colour like Baudelaire's *Fleurs-de-Mal*. . .

He met Kitty very frequently. She kept a little memorandum in which their meetings were recorded.



Her sketchy accounts of herself sounded like bits lifted bodily from a girl's novel that had been written by a "daring" authoress. Once she told Martin that she was wealthy. A Russian nobleman who had burned himself to death for love of her had left her a great deal of money. . . They were passing into the Laurel Restaurant as she finished the story. Martin was worried by the thought that he had not sufficient money to stand a meal in keeping with her splendour, but suddenly she clutched him by the arm and put a handful of silver into his coat pocket. He was stunned a little, although relieved, for the possibility of a painful situation had been suddenly averted. And had not George Moore created a similar situation around the hero in *Evelyn Innes*?

Yet after this quite unexpected fashion there arose about him a sense of comfort and well-being. Kitty began to invite him out to grand hotels in Kingstown and Bray. These were curious, cloudy adventures, hung mistily about the impudent glory of her sculptured pose. . .

Sometimes she talked of England in her pleasant English accent; of quiet villages with their neat houses and trim lawns. There suddenly arose the picture of her moving against these surroundings and then it came out in her talk with him that she was a clergyman's daughter and that she was a divorced woman. At least she said that she had been divorced. These little stabs of information flashed out so casually that they scarcely shocked him into appreciation of the depth to which he had fallen, seeing that it was only a few months since he had left the clay. Yet the mixed circumstances of his present entanglement sometimes

suggested to his mind that he had arisen—a minister's daughter, imagine! Again he saw Miss Alexandra Smyth, the daughter of the Rector of Glannidan, a tidy little person who dressed in white and kept a toy dog to run after her down the road. Often as he walked into Glannidan, his big boots scraping along the road, he had met her and pulled his cap sideways by way of salutation in the ancient feudal fashion.

"He was a rough, horrible old scoundrel, who used to hurt me frightfully. It was my money that he married, the few hundreds that I have as income. He took me away from that quiet parsonage in Surrey where I was happy to the only life he could give me, the stage, and all the disgusting devils I met there. How I loathe to think of them with their filthy, womanish ways, but you, Martin, dearest, my great big peasant lover. . ."

In such talk did she reveal herself, and so his feelings of gradual disgust were mingled with feelings of adventurous exaltation. Yet he very often shuddered to think of what they would say of him in Glannidan now. . .

His life was becoming rapidly more and more remote from that which a Christian gentleman should lead. But he was an Irish peasant, and this was how the brutality of the clay had chosen to express itself in him. "The Tower" had never put any such character on the stage as he was in reality; *The Playboy of the Western World* was a very feeble scoundrel indeed by comparison. . . If ever they should come to read about him in Glannidan or Glannanea how could they be angry? He was one of themselves, and his vivid literary expression in terms of life the publication of

them before the world. . . Perhaps Brian Doyle would attempt an attack upon the book for the *Ballycullen Gazette*. It would abound in all the well-worn phrases which made up his style. . . "An outrage upon 'all creeds and classes,' "parishioners, respectable people are implicated." "A cold blooded attack upon the Irish peasant and upon holy Ireland."

How they would enjoy that attack upon him in this old rag which was published every Thursday in Ballycullen. As it was passed eagerly from hand to hand any single copy of the paper would grow limp and dirty as a dish-cloth. . . Indeed the word was singularly apposite as a description of the *Ballycullen Gazette*. It was certainly a dish-cloth in the hands of Brian Doyle. He used it to rub the dirt off from people who struck his fancy on to people who did not.

Yet there were moments when Martin felt the immense punishment of his degradation. It sometimes seemed a very terrible thing that he should have been ordained to suffer like this, and merely because it had appeared particularly fitting to Fate that it was through him this dirty little place should be expressed before the world. He felt that the structure of an enormous tragedy was being reared about himself and Kitty Haymer. . . There were moments when she appeared essentially noble and great almost as the woman in a Greek play, and he too like *Œdipus*, because of the woman he had married. . .

It often seemed particularly unfair that he who had never even mixed himself with the life of Glannidan and Glannanea should have been chosen to make this example of himself before the world. And Kitty Haymer, this pretty Englishwoman, what had she to

do with all the dirt that had ever oozed from any place in Ireland? She hated Ireland with all the bigoted hatred of her nationality, yet she must be sacrificed and her beauty made to fade perhaps for sake of Ireland, because in a remote district of Ireland, until Martin Duignan had sprung from them, men had hidden their vileness in quiet ways. . .

There were lucid moments when Martin thought of other gentry who might some day come to figure in this story. These were the clever critics who might review him, very timid Philistines whose aim in life was that they might never offend any kind of opinion either public or private. Their notices would be all after the same pattern, so that by reading one of them one would have read them all. . . To begin with, this was untrue to average Irish life, and that the author had putrefied his mind by reading Zola and that he had merely succeeded in perpetuating another sneer at Ireland like the stuff they produced at the Tower Theatre . . . he was the man with the muck-rake in his hand . . . he had outraged the feelings of every lover of Ireland . . . no such character as his hero, although it was almost a blasphemy of language to use the word in describing such a depraved character, had ever come out of Ireland or, in fact, out of anywhere but the brain or the book of Mr. Martin Duignan . . . if his mind was as bad as his book he was bound to end a thoroughly wicked life by his own hand. . .

This he felt full well was likely to be his only reward from the Ireland of his time, for it was the poor reward that many others had won.

"If you want to write, Duignan," Phelim O'Brien had said to him, "you must come live with us, as the

saying is, you must descend to our level and become a swine for only then can you get your snout, so to speak, under the muck of life and root it up for the world to see."

Ellen O'Connor with the cleaner ambition she had raised up in him was very far from him in these days. . . . It was down this strange path he was walking the sad way of the writer now and even Séan O'Hanlon had lost his little influence over him. The season at the Tower was coming to an end, and instead of going on tour with the Company he was remaining here in Dublin with Kitty Haymer. They met every morning, and, day by day, she seemed to gain greater influence over him. She was continually by his side, pulling him down from every decent resolve to a negation almost of his will and personality. . . . They left the summer sunlight and went into dark picture houses. Then it was the sunlight again with the clouds hung low before their eyes. . . . Every day they went for luncheon to the "Laurel Restaurant." Sometimes Martin paid the waitress, who always regarded them curiously, but more often was it Kitty who paid.

On the days her allowance arrived from England she had fits of spending, expensive cigarettes and wine, and drives far into the country. She was not very fond of drink, but it amused her to observe the effect of it upon Martin. . . . He always liked to go into St. Stephen's Green and to remain until the sunlit scene had preyed sufficiently upon his mood. Then he would write scraps of muddy verse and she would praise his person and his genius. He thought of himself as rapidly qualifying to be a second George Moore. . . . He was a modern lover, not in Paris but in Dublin.

Once upon such an occasion she went with him into the dark woods, which the Dublin poets love. It was a lovely evening, and the sun going down behind the mountains made patterns of gold upon the leaves and upon the ground. . . Suddenly Kitty stood all whitely gleaming against the background of the tall, dark trees.

"Let us be a nymph and a dryad of the woods," she said in her sudden, impulsive way, "and then you can write a poem on it like Keats."

She made a wreath of laurels for his brow as, in the succeeding sadness, he repeated Dowson's poem "*Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae.*" . . She called him her poet, her prince, her master, the lord of her life. . . Then they began to speak for the first time of leaving Dublin together. It would be such a "lark," she said; and her eyes were gleaming as she gazed deeply into his eyes. . .

## II

A FEW curious little causes had gone to determine this decision. Their inward weariness had begun to reshape their world. . . They had become well-known figures moving together about the streets of Dublin, so well-known indeed that a feeling of shame had begun to struggle into the breast of Martin. Cattle men up from Glannidan for the market would often poke their heads out of a thick crowd and stare at them as they went past. . . One night, too, in Kingstown, who, of all people, had Martin seen but Father Clarke sitting in a secluded place and looking out upon the sea. . . Kitty wondered what could have been the matter a little later so fully did his mind seem occupied by some far thought. . . This little shadow of separation by something behind their present way of life caused each to fully realise one another in this moment. . . She was struck curiously by the thought that it was their different nationality that had suddenly arisen as the barrier between their souls. Few love words fell from either of them on this night, but instead they began to discuss points in the age-long hatred of Ireland and England. . . Then she cried and flew into hysterics. In the morning Martin felt acutely miserable. They returned to Dublin in the tram and parted without a word of tenderness at the corner of Nassau Street.

When he went to the new lodgings he had taken at the behest of Kitty he found a letter from his mother awaiting him. He recognized the poor writing on the envelope at once. Inside were a few lines which made

the strangest attempts to remove themselves from the page, a sorry scrawl. The letter told of Jamesey Cassels who had married his sister, Brigid.

"He never stopped drinking in the widow Kelly's since he came to learn about the child. And that was not bad enough, but he's after leaving her and going back to Mucklin. The grand meadow field is after rotting on the shank and the oats is falling off the head. It's what I write to ask if maybe you could get a holiday or something and come home to give us a hand. We heard from Father Clarke that you were after getting put out of College. He's a grand man, and you should never forget him, the way he sent Peter O'Brien to settle you in Dublin and all. Now, Martin, it's what I want to ask you, what d'ye be doing in Dublin these times? I do be having the quarest dreams about you."

What was he doing now? The present way of his life was such a dark part of his consciousness that his search for a reply resulted merely in a great, dumb sadness. . . He spent the day in striving to write something, and in the afternoon his new landlady, Margaret Murtagh, came into his room. She was a woman of the Midlands who had come away from the country many many years before to make a fortune for herself by keeping a boarding house in Dublin. She had made no fortune, but only a bare living, which removed her but a little way from poverty. Martin thought of her as possessing at one time some desire to raise herself above the mean life of the narrow places. Now she looked worn and broken, although it might be said that she was still a fine figure of a woman. It was a hard life, this continual scraping to make ends meet.



Boarders frequently left her without paying their bills, and there was a man stopping with her just presently, a solicitor, whom she had been hoping would marry her for the past four or five years, and who had not paid her a penny during all that time.

This was the only joy of her life, this hour of the day when she put on a white blouse and her best black skirt. She was not yet an old maid although perilously near that age when a woman stands in urgent need of adornment. Martin was immediately oppressed by a smell of scent, so heavily administered that it subdued the odour of the greasy plates and the dirt of the kitchen which somehow clung about her still. He felt, too, that she had come into the room to ask him for his board for the past few weeks. Perhaps she had mistaken him too for he did not now appear a very reliable boarder, coming in at all hours of the morning and sleeping through half the day. Here was she before him now in this dual realisation of the peasant, strongly repulsive compared with the woman he had just left and with whom he was so intimately entangled. . . He caught the ample body of Margaret Murtagh in his arms, in no embrace of affection but rather in some curious prostitution of himself. But, just presently he had no money with which to pay his board. . . She breathed against his cheek in quiet surrender, and he could not help thinking of the man she expected to marry her. . .

When he went down into the dining-room, before going out to the Tower, she would have a nice tea waiting for him. But there was a smear of disgust across his thought. . . The dusk was beginning to creep into the room. Across the wide roof of old

Dublin the shadows were stealing, and far away towards the Coombe he could hear a barrel-organ playing.

*"What d'ye be doing now?"*

These words from his mother's letter were burning into his brain. This was what he was doing while there was sorrow in his mother's house and the harvest still in the fields. . . There was a sickness of heart upon him as he took his tea. Margaret moved about him in attendance. . .

He was blind to the beauty of the evening scenes as he went on through the streets. Passing "The Daffodils" he thought of taking a drink, but his disgust merely swelled higher with the thought. The decadents would all be in here, the wasters talking of books they had never written nor never would write. . . At the stage door of the Tower he was oppressed by the thought that Ellen O'Connor would be waiting in the wings to speak to him with a quiet look of trust in her eyes. . . A few minutes later, as he stood before the mirror in his dressing-room he was saddened by the thought that he was supremely unworthy of her. He was chilled into a bronze stillness of despair as he stood there gazing into the mirror. . . The other actor in the room was quoting passages from *The Hound of Heaven* to himself. . .

He started abruptly, and going into the office told Mr. Leonard Thompson that he had made up his mind to leave the Tower Theatre. Mr. Thompson snorted in quiet amazement, and his surprise seemed very calm indeed by the side of this great intention of Martin's to change the ignoble way of his life at the bidding of his mother and to bend in filial fulfilment to the clay. . . . In the intervals of his part on the stage he told Ellen of his sudden resolve to leave Dublin. She agreed

with him that it was a poor sort of place for anyone to think of spending their lives. If he went to America his writings would soon make him rich and famous there. . . She hoped he would not forget that she would then be fading in that shop in George's Street where she worked during the day. Indeed she wished that she could break away from Dublin too. . . So there while a play about Robert Emmet and Sara Curran was being played upon the stage they listened half-light-heartedly to the pitiful story of the love of that dead man for that dead woman and fluttered timidly about the realisation of their own love. . . For all the pagan sensuality into which his life had drifted he was truly noble in his every feeling whenever he spoke with Ellen. It seemed to be because of her that he had thought of leaving Dublin to save himself. Already his mind had turned back to the scenes of his youth as a way of escape, but now, through the suggestion of her presence, it had leaped far in pursuit of his ambition. . . But the immortal longing of the clay still made an immense struggle within his breast. . .

It would mean escape from the dark spell of Kitty Haymer too, yet, by what seemed the queerest accident, he met her that night in Grafton Street as he walked home pensively from the Tower. She had just come out of a picture house in which an American film had captivated her.

"I'm going there next. I'm sick of this filthy Dublin she said.

"Funny, I have just been thinking of going to America, too," said Martin.

"Oh, then, let's go together, It'll be the greatest fun. I've just got my allowance!"

Her eyes were upon him again even as they had been in the deep, dark woods, and he seemed always powerless before that rich look. . . Yet it brought him none of the soul's gladness which had so often flowed out to him from the eyes of Ellen when they had gone walking together like dream figures through the enchanted streets.

## III

NOW their minds were altogether so concentrated upon flight that they put on the faces of fugitives. Their lives had been suddenly swallowed in a great eagerness to be away from Dublin and from Ireland. Whenever they were together now they were fond of taking occasional glances at the tickets to America, which he carried. Continually she saw him, not the declining figure he presently was in Dublin, but dressed up as a cinema actor in America with a new velour hat, a cigar, and an amount of gallant assurance.

"You'll be my Maurice Costello!" she was fond of saying.

It was strange that Kitty should have come to conceive a genuine affection for him. She now saw him as her real husband, in whom she might take pride as the citizen of another country. She fancied somehow, beyond the torture of her doubts, that a certain validity could be given to her connection by a sincere love. . . She had thrown away the little book in which she had been accustomed to write down her appointments with her other lovers. . . Yet was there upon Martin, very frequently, remembrance of these things. But she had shown great kindnesses towards him. It was through her that he was now moving towards his ambition achieved for love of Ellen O'Connor. It hardly ever struck him to think of the traitor he was both in his mind and in his life. . . He often wondered why his heart should be for ever torn. . .

Now that he had thought, even momentarily, of

returning to the clay, it seemed even more strange that he had been plucked away from what should have been his real life to this queer destiny. . . Lucy Flynn with her talk of cattle and the crops was very far from him now. . . The girl he had known at Mrs. McQuestion's he had seen late one night, a wan face wrapped up in a shawl. . . Ellen he still met, but Kitty Haymer was always very near to him; yet out there in America who could say what curious happenings might yet evolve! He might be rid of her. They might gradually tire of one another and agree to separate. Not exactly that he desired this for she still possessed a certain curious fascination of personality that would make her eminently desirable to any man. . . And besides she was continually the means of connecting him with a grander way of life, which was an agreeable flattery of his vanity.

She had bought a pretty outfit for this expedition to America and had compelled him to accept the present of a splendid suit as well. In fact between the purchase of the tickets and all her allowance was overdrawn for several terms to come. But they looked an unusually brilliant pair as they stepped aboard at Queenstown, he speaking in imitation of her fine English accent. The crowd with whom they mingled looked at them admiringly and thought them a very well-matched pair indeed. Yet when he read the coupling of their names together on the list of passengers it was with feelings of curious abasement rather than of pride. . . But there was no chance of anyone seeing them now here travelling second class on a swift Atlantic liner, and when they sat down to luncheon, to the good food so cleanly served, the excellence of his luck began to appear in a very

comforting way to Martin. . . Certainly he had progressed amazingly since the days when he had followed the plough. . . But there was one thing that rankled in his mind, his quiet farewell to Ellen O'Connor, the secretive, evasive answers he had given to her considerate questions. . .

"You'll remember me, Martin, dear, for always and always, for ever and ever."

"For always and always, for ever and ever."

"And you will make a great name for yourself with that fine brain of yours, a name that will ring all over the world."

"Yes, darling."


Remembering this now he hated himself. How on earth had he managed to look into her trusting eyes? It had been a near thing once or twice to have averted a meeting in the company of Kitty. . . He pictured Ellen dreaming in the vacant moments of the shop in George's Street, dreaming of him who was now crossing over to America with Kitty Haymer. . . But he would do great things yet for her sake, yes, he would *do* great things yet for her sake. . . But there was Kitty still so fascinating by his side.

He had written a short note to his mother saying simply that he could not go home to Glannidan, that he had got a great job in America and was going there. He had a half-conscious recollection that this was the usual, vague way of setting the wisp of talk alight in Glannidan. "A great job in America!" They would talk over a rumour of the kind for months all around Glannanea. It would flatter his mother's pride to know that her son was on the way to triumph. But they would be in a poor way, his sister and herself, with

no man in the house. Doubtless they would expect some help from him, for had not both of them to some extent, determined his present way of life? Very clearly he remembered another phrase from her letter: "And all the money that was spent on you."

He did not find the pleasure he had anticipated in the voyage. Its monotony increased the weariness which had already begun to creep into his soul. They were thrown so continually into the company of one another that they had already begun to fade in each other's eyes. . . . For the first time in his life he knew the real bitterness of a woman's tongue, and once there sprang a cry from her which amazed even Martin, who had produced it. . . . It was like the cry he had once heard in the ditch near Glannidan, the broken though still rebellious cry of a tinker's woman with her man kicking her. . . . He felt that fierce love had often been quenched down to such an ugly ending. . . .

The bright gaiety of their passion had become dimmed. There seemed to be a certain obligation upon him now with regard to her and it was a fetter which hurt. Continually was he turning from her, when she wished him to linger by her side and talk of the wide glory of the sea, to his writing-pad and his pipe and chair on the deck, where he wanted to go on with his writing for love of Ellen. But he could write nothing while she was so near him. . . . Once when she asked him for her sake to think more seriously of a real way of life in America he had spoken crossly, and she had replied with obscene words which cut two-edged into his soul. Because of her, perhaps, and because of the deadly influence of the blithering crowd he had met in "The Daffodils" the great ambition that had been





raised up in him through contact with the noble fact of the Tower Theatre, the clean idealism of Séan O'Hanlon and the love of Ellen O'Connor had not been fulfilled. . . He never included himself in any accusation of this kind, for even at the most tortured times there was always upon him a feeling of wonder as to the strangeness of the personality he had taken away from the clay. Yet now for all the curious magic of the difference he had made in himself, he was aimless, useless to all seeming for the battle of life, a man without a single qualification for entry into the tumultuous life of America. He was merely possessed of the dream of authorship, the dream of a dream. . . Neither Kitty nor he were very hopeful or very happy as they sailed into New York Harbour. The thought of this land of liberty made no new and brave appeal to them who, seeking through what they were pleased to call liberty, had found only an enduring bondage.

## IV

THEY went to a theatrical boarding-house in 45th Street; Kitty had had experience of such places in her tours of England. Not so Martin, who now saw this side of the stage for the first time. The situation seemed to decide momentarily the bent of his inclinations, intentions and possibilities. He thought he had said farewell to the stage upon leaving Dublin and the Tower, but now the very circumstances of his flight had determined his return to it, not the stage, however, of art and literature, but that of mud and doggerel. Kitty fell easily among these people. Although the immediate distrust of the Americans to her as an Englishwoman remained the strongest feature of their association there was something of the real and deeper kinship of the stage between them as well. Because of that touch of literary perception he had acquired in the National Library, in "The Daffodils" and in the Tower, he beheld these large Americans with almost the clarity of Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *The American Notes*. He listened, sometimes unmoved, more often merely irritated, to their great bombast as they sat eating their queer food in the dining-room where a crowd of them always lingered, gobbling and gabbling. . . Now neither Kitty nor he kept one another in torment with battling over the age-long quarrel between his country and the British Empire. They were united in their detestation of America, and so some of the old regard for one another had re-awakened in them. The first days drifted fruitlessly.

The monster that was America loomed ever more hugely around them, and their talk at all times was but an echo to their fear.

The pictorial idea, the jolly romantic film play of America, had completely disappeared, and their attempt to retreat daily from reality was increasingly more miserable for further and further were they entering into the shame of one another. Their slight resources had dwindled to an alarming extent and he had not found work. The sense of his failure smote him doubly. He had not made a single step along the path of his ambition for love of Ellen, nor had he so far made any return for all the kind assistance of Kitty. . . It seemed sufficient treachery to one and the other to go the round of the theatrical agents every morning and to bear the perpetual insults of big men with enormous cigars and diamond-studded fronts.

"The Tower Theatre, is it? Some theatre that. We don't want you."

Now it was wholly unlike their days in Dublin when both she and he had had money and a certain amount of leisure to spend it. Now was there something utterly different in their relations. Their lives were becoming more and more of a burden, each now with a separate and complete torture. . . Kitty acutely felt the compulsion of her life with Martin, who now seemed less admirable than the man she had left. She tortured him with talking of the mistake she had made in attempting to escape from the mess which had been her marriage with Edmund Haymer.

He now spent a great portion of his time in the streets fearful of meeting the face of Kitty sitting there in their poor room, so much alone with her tongue turning to

greater and greater bitterness because she had been robbed by him of the gay life she loved so well. . . And whenever he returned early it was continuously the same hopeless tale. . . Sometimes he came in exhausted with hunger. He took only his breakfast in the house, and she would save him little scraps of bread or meat from her dinner which he ate ravenously. . . Then a sleepless night to break only into another unhappy day.

His days were queer things as the torture of each one became heaped upon the torture of those that went before it. He was an aimless wanderer here in the great roaring city of New York. His face did not betray his nationality, although his heavy coat of Irish frieze, the one good article of clothing in his possession, hinted that he came from Ireland. The heels of his shoes were rapidly disappearing, and there is nothing quite so depressing to the wearer as vanished heels. They are an epitome of failure. From thinking of work as he moved about the streets he had come to think more and more frequently of food. He stopped often before the window of a "Childs Restaurant." In the days when he had had leisure to express an opinion on anything in terms of literature he would have thought of the "Childs Restaurant" as the most expressive institution in America. The men baking the wheat cakes upon the hot plate behind the window of polished glass, the shining walls, the white-robed attendants, the glistening nickel fittings, the shining quickness with which the food was served; all appealed to his sense of the theatrical and fascinated him. . . Those who have never been hungry are quite unable to realise the effect that food has upon life. . . If he could go into a "Childs

Restaurant" at any time he knew he would emerge as with the halo of a metamorphosis. . .

It was New Year's Eve and he turned from contemplation of the window of the Restaurant and faced towards where the din was already beginning on Broadway. It was like the rumble of distant thunder, but it was cheerful thunder. He did not suddenly think of the celebration in its symbolic or religious aspect, but just like the "Childs Restaurant" as part of the howling blatancy of America. How it swelled and rose! He had already heard that New York's ringing out of the Old Year was an appalling thing. He passed into the thick of it, a lonely wanderer, with a dark cloud around him. The very lights of Broadway seemed to evolve a golden shrieking against the sky. . . Here was an advertisement for the pretence of America which hid its baseness and cruelty and hunger. . . He moved forward with difficulty. Here and there he got wedged in amongst the crowd. He avoided as best he could the blasts of the coloured paper bugles, but he was already white from the confetti which fell from the windows above him as a snow-shower. He was almost deafened by the noise of the things which were specially manufactured for making this kind of noise. These were shockingly effective. How meaninglessly excited were the faces of the men; how lost to dignity the faces of the women? . . . In this moment surely was the gallant riding of the uncurbed passion as of a mad sweaty rider against a lonely wind-swept hill. It became oppressive, saddening. . . He could not shoulder his way through it any further. He would have to turn into a side street and go a longer way

home. That was all it meant to him, more weariness, more torture.

He thought it was 45th Street into which he had turned; but he was so glad to escape that it did not matter. He merely felt released, thankful. There was a man standing up the street a little way in the shadows watching the whole mad pageant go by. . . Martin stopped suddenly. He thought he knew the man. He spoke to him and the man made reply in an Irish accent, which had some of the hardness of the northern province. . . Why, it was Arthur Nicholson whom he had met just once in "The Daffodils," and who had been introduced to him by Phelim O'Brien as the first Orangeman to renounce capitalised faction and turn poet. . . They exchanged a few remarks regarding the futile idiocy of the celebration they had just been witnessing. There was something magnificent and mighty in the serene repose of the poet before all that howling littleness. When he laughed it was like the laughter of a god. . . In a few moments he had explained his presence here. He had come to America as a member of a theatrical company to produce plays which were also literature. He spoke of his mission with pride, considering himself the artistic emissary of one nation to another. He was most cordial in his invitation to enter the company of his fellow-actors. Martin went into a shining café and sat amongst them. . .

Suddenly here in this saloon in America through power of this literary companionship was he back again in "The Daffodils," and through imagination of "The Daffodils" back further in the widow Kelly's pub in Glannidan. . . He was listening to talk which told

only of his hopelessness slowly erecting about him the circle of his doom. . . . However the drinks they were standing him were bringing back some of the old enthusiasm which was rapidly making a horrible caricature of him as he sat there in his present condition. It was a grand thing, he imagined, to hear himself talking about books and literature while over yonder in 46th Street was the woman who had helped him to America. And in that dingy shop in George's Street in Dublin Ellen O'Connor was dreaming of the fame that was to come to him. . . . And in Glannanea his mother, very probably, was still anxious to convince the neighbours of the great job her son Martin was after getting in America. . . . Yet there were moments when he almost felt great in his spiritual emancipation. He was absolutely unlike any Irish immigrant who had ever come from Erin. He was curiously unstirred by any thought of Ireland. That part of his soul was one with those parts of him that had died. The essential element of his country, that constituent from which the national life sprang upward to flower to what perfection it might attain—the clay and its breed, he had seen with the realistic and not with the romantic eye. No thought of poetry or Ellen coloured his mood when he remembered the life of Glannidan and Glannanea.

He was spiritual exile, too, for no stir of comradeship or patriotism came to him when he often stood to watch an Irish-American procession go by, the men all dressed in black and bedecked in green with a great green flag at their head. . . . Even the frantic cheers and the hat waving of those on the side-walk only made him faintly smile. . . . He was like no Irishman that had ever been, and he knew it so he was always very remote from the

grand pageant sweeping by. . . As he caught glimpses of the dark, purposeful faces of the men he imagined them to be thinking of Ireland, and that in their eyes as they marched were heroic visions of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, Dan O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell, all curiously though brilliantly commingled. . . . It seemed a shame that he was not one of them. . . . And yet a very ancient Irishman who had once plucked his sleeve as he stood thus gazing remote and lonely had said:

"Now I want to ask you, young fellow, did you ever see anything so gorgeous as them guys and they going by, for every mother's son of them is a fine, smart fellow with a great job, a ward heeler, a cop, a saloon keeper, a bar-tender, a bum, a bully or a bowsie. Of course it's no right, I suppose, to question the way they get their dollars when they're all so ready to fire the stuff at envoys to America whenever they tramp over here with the hat held out looking for subscriptions to 'The Cause,' and wouldn't you know well by the green and gold eyes of them that there isn't one of them guys at the present moment but's ready to frizzle for pure love of Ireland." . . .

Martin knew some comfort in the thought that there were many honoured names around him whose secret stories would not bear telling at the same firesides by which they were almost beatified for sending home the money.



## V

NOW succeeded a curious stopping, as if for a moment, of Martin upon the downward path. A minor member of the company dropped out, and Nicholson got him the job, which consisted for the most part of walker on in the crowd. He was very glad to get it, although in comparison it was nothing better than the job he had already left at the Tower. But it was better than walking the streets, and would mean a surcease from torture for the month or so that it lasted. It would mean an opportunity of talking again in the old way that was sweet to him, the curious, melancholy way that had become a part of his life, that condition wherein he became magnified and fondly imagined his name upon the covers of books. . .

Kitty was slipping further and further out of his mind. He had written to Ellen and back to him had already come a letter in reply, full of the most anxious regard. Kitty watched him narrowly one morning as he read it. . . It was not until then that her hatred for him really leaped into flame. Her money was quite gone now and this was a condition she had never before known. She blamed him for it entirely, although he paid the landlady for her food now, but he had to keep a little for the entertainment of himself and his friends during these frozen nights in New York.

Often as he sat in the very midst of it he would strive to view himself in this hour "after the show." Arthur Nicholson did not accompany him, but wandered New York in search of material for an

epic which he was writing. Consequently Martin's companions were Connor, Harman and McKeon, who, although amateurs only a year or so before, were now real actors muffled up in great coats and with long hair. . . First came a flow of stage talk. Then as this customary discussion of the faults of their fellow-players began to dwindle their night became suddenly filled by some unusual incident or personality passing vaguely for a moment into their lives.

A man was coming towards them down the tessellated floor of the saloon. Connor nudged the others, remarking in his best American: "Here's a guy made up as an actor"! He might not be an actor exactly, figured Harman, but he resembled an actor in the manner in which he behaved. The three actors were watching him most carefully. Martin watched their faces as they watched the other man. They were psychometrists in their different ways and this kind of thing gave them immense pleasure. The newly-entered one had called for a drink, and was now talking theatrically with the bar-man. They guessed so much from the loud gestures of him and by the way in which he was letting the words out of his mouth. The bar-man was listening, with that kind of attention in which boredom is evident, to a story which had often fallen upon his ears. Suddenly, at a whisper from the other, the man turned sharply round.

"Say, but he's coming our way!" ejaculated McKeon.

Connor said nothing as he pulled at his old calabash. . . . And down upon them he came like something inevitable. It was only a little way up the counter where he had been standing, but a great space of time seemed

to separate the moment when the resolve had sprung into his mind to the moment in which he stood by them. There seemed to hang about him such a sense of indecision that one could scarcely think of him as doing anything definite at all. Even as he came towards them his eyes were wandering and wondering in vacuity. . . . He was a pale, exhausted man with light hair and an undisturbed, impersonal look. The last glass of beer he had ordered at the bar he now carried in his hand to the table around which the actors sat. The salutation was abrupt and decisive:

"Will you gentlemen allow me to buy a drink for you?"

"Certainly, friend," said Connor, whose glass was empty, and who, being the father of the company, felt himself called upon to make this statement.

Soon the drinks were on the table before them, and it was not long until he had added cigars. They knew well that they would have to pay the penalty of being thus entertained, and show by their behaviour and their speech that it was delightful to be an actor. The newcomer said that his name was Nolan and that he was from Dublin, in Ireland.

"Nine years ago when I was an actor in the Broadway Teeayther." (For a theatrical enthusiast it was strange to hear him pronounce his favourite word with such incorrectness.) His tongue, however, seemed to linger around the dear sound of the word and his eyes now gleamed with a look that was definite. Harman mirthfully kicked McKeon under the table. It was a pretty crude story.

"It may seem funny, gentlemen, but even in the old country I was always full of the idea of going on the


stage, but the father wouldn't hear of it, so I had to come to this country to get my chance. But I used to be a great gymnastic performer. I was once offered an engagement in Pat Kinsella's Music-hall in Dublin."

He seemed quite unable to distinguish between degrees or divisions of the stage. To sing a song in the manner of George Lashwood was, he said, one of the most striking turns of his great ambition. His talk flowed on upon a tide of beer. . . The bar-tenders smiled in the polished distance, for it was well known that he had been merely employed as a "super" upon one occasion at the Broadway Theatre. . . Each contribution of drink meant another long instalment of his story. He was acquainted with obscure facts in the careers of great actors, yet was he better acquainted with the careers of subsided and lost actors. He rapidly recounted queer, disgusting stories of once famous mummers who had gone on the rocks, of fallen stars who borrowed half-dollars from bar-tenders they had known in their hey-days, and of others still further fallen who would follow one all round New York for a glass of beer.

He left them to guess how his own real existence passed, but his philosophy of life as expressed in his reminiscences went to show that his whole conception of having a good time was to do with as little sleep as possible. Carefully cultivated insomnia and talking of the stage seemed to be the two things for which he continued to live this life.

"Was he still connected with the stage?"

No, he was not. His brother, a man who had no education attached to him, good or bad, had put him off it by repeated threats.



"Now if only I could have afforded the time to wait for engagements like other actors, what might I not have become? I might be wearing a grand fur coat now and listening to people saying as I passed through the streets: 'There's Ignatius Nolan, the famous Irish actor!' That, gentlemen, was the future I put before me nine years ago when I was an actor in the Broadway Teeayther."

As the evening passed, the others knocked good fun out of this poor enthusiast, as well as good entertainment. But although he was thankful for the beer and the cigars Martin did not enter into the joke with the same relish. He saw the pity of this fool through the fool that was in himself. Here was one with purple longings of the same pattern as those which hung around his own mind, one who could never have made the actor that he fancied himself, just as he, Martin Duignan, might never make the writer he dreamt of being, both still clinging desperately to the associations of the dream. . . Yet, even as he listened to the others chuckling at the good evening joke that their stray entertainer had made of himself, he knew that it was he only who had felt and seen the queer reality of Nolan and in that seeing eye of his human sympathy there might still be hope for him as a writer.

## VI

WITH the departure of Arthur Nicholson's Company from New York and the consequent conclusion of his engagement, Martin felt that America had hopelessly defeated him. He was being removed further and further from the stage and literature, in fact from life itself, by continuing in a course which questioned one of the facts which control life. . . He never passed a theatre now, outside one of which the great electric signs would be blazing, but he felt himself an essential portion of the firmament of which these things were the burning glory. During his little engagement, for all the association of downfall with which it had been attendant, he had struggled up some distance in the theatre. He had had a visiting card printed, which sometimes got him admission to the theatre on Broadway. . . One night he had gone to see a play in 43rd Street, and to Kitty it was an event which momentarily ended their torment, and she seemed to struggle back again into some of the gaiety which had so long fallen from her. He, too, wore his best clothes, but as they stood in the vestibule of the theatre they looked like two poor survivals from a brilliant past, two figures, as it were, out of a comic paper, as they stood there among the brilliant crowd. . . Once in the auditorium they chatted gaily enough, and just as soon as the curtain rose they began to criticise the acting, for the quality of being satirically critical had somehow come to Martin in the Tower and Kitty had acquired it long since in distant England. . . Momentarily they forgot

the kind of life which they were now compelled to live. Yet, once back in their dismal room, each felt that their little taste of joy had only the effect of making them still more angry with one another. Then suddenly it seemed that it was the theatre that had ruined both of them. In one wide sweep of remorse he saw with clear eyes the life from which he had sprung. There were young men who had come away from the country just like him and they had made a success of their lives, at least according to the vulgar estimate of success as it obtained in Glannidan. He had seen them coming home from this America with their padded shoulders and wide pants and high-heeled shoes and little round hats, and heard them speak of their greatness over yonder. These, he could well feel even now, had been moments of triumph for such men, the old men and women marvelling the while that bits of their own clay could have arisen to such supreme perfection. If he could return as them, even now, it would be a solace to his mother. There came a curious re-awakening of sympathy with her.

He knew the names of some who had left Glannidan and Glannanea, and won to such success that they had become saloon-keepers. Next day he went to the great Metropolitan Library, and taking down a Directory searched for the names of some of those he had known and heard of as saloon-keepers. He scribbled the addresses on a slip of paper, and that very day went out in quest of his fortune. He searched in his pockets and discovered that he had 40 cents. He knew that a glass of beer must be purchased in every saloon he entered, but with these there would be the compensation of a free snack or a free luncheon and a number

of such might produce the same effect on a man as a decent dinner. Again he had begun to think altogether in terms of food.

He had gone in and out of a great many saloons since his coming to America, grand palaces of dazzling glass and polished wood where white-robed attendants stood attentively behind the bar; queer houses in mean streets where women waited round little tables. . . He had an idea that the kind of saloons he sought would be characterised midway between these two extremes, so it was along streets where he might find such places that he went.

"Joe Reilly." The first name upon the list was burning itself into his mind. He remembered Joe as a man whom his dead father could not endure. "That man is a vulgar clown!" He distinctly remembered the phrase in which his father had described Joe Reilly to his mother upon a memorable occasion when the American had called while on an ostentatious visit to Glannidan.

"Arrah, man, what vulgar is he, and him having a great job or something? That's the lad that got on well. Sure, I remember him and me going to school together, he used never to have a breeches that you'd know the masterpiece on. And look at him now with a saloon, they say, of his own!"

"He's a dirty, vulgar hound, and I'd think nothing of telling him so, and kicking him out of the house. The like of them fellows set a bad example when they come over here luring young fellows and girls to destruction by their big talk and their bragging."

"Ah, but sure, sometimes they bring them to more good fortune than the ones that stay behind."



He could realise, too, as he remembered it, that his mother must have meant this as a cut even as she meant all such sayings, for her face wore a vexatious little look as she said it and her voice was slightly touched with disdain. . . It was the very best way she had of sending his father from the house and across the fields into Glannidan. . .

It seemed very strange that he should be thinking of this and striving, half consciously, to fit the incident into the vague scheme of romance his mind was always striving to weave. Yet for all his faults, and they were many, the dead man his mother had married always seemed far more admirable than this great podgy creature he was now searching these streets in the hope of meeting, the man who had sat so stolidly before the fire in the kitchen smoking a big cigar and spitting into the ashes and talking windy talk about America. . .

He walked into the East Side Café which had Joe Reilly's name above the door. It was years since he had seen him, then in the flush of his prosperous twenties, but immediately he recognised the man with the heavy jowl who stood evidently discussing some matter of political graft with a knot of men just inside the door. The air was thick with blasphemy and smoke.

"Well, you God-damned son of a bitch!" he said just as soon as Martin had announced himself. Then he took him into the bar and stood him a glass of beer. Thus had Martin been saved disappointment first shot, and his 40 cents were so far untouched. Joe Reilly was talking rapidly. Hitherto Martin had been in contact with the intelligence of America. Now, however, he was dealing with the crude material. His intellectual superiority was pitifully apparent to him-

self, yet somehow it was the remembered Yank of his boyhood days in Glannanea that was in his mind. . . . There was a puzzled light in the eyes of Joe Reilly, too, as if his mind was being sped by a similar effort of memory. Martin was beginning to experience the old cowardly sensation, in fact the most marked feeling that a man took away with him from Glannidan and Glannanea, a certain shame of his appearance in the presence of another who knew something of his family history. It seemed scarcely possible that Joe Reilly could be pained by the same feelings of abasement. . . . Yet he was certainly in a state of excitement, mouthing out a great volume of irrelevance. But he was an Irishman, and it might be that he wished, by talking thus, to take his mind away from that fireside in Ireland where he had once talked in much the same way to help him forget that it was Arthur Duignan and not himself who had married the only girl he had ever loved. Despite his uncouth exterior there was still a rare softness in his heart for that woman, and here was her son now seeing him in his natural dirt in this place and surrounded by the scum of the East Side of New York. . . . There were coming curious, awkward breaks in the conversation, moments when both were plunged in abysmal regrets. . . . But these passed with little, sad flutters from their minds for each was making a courageous effort to act his part before the other. . . . Joe Reilly was speaking as rapidly as his heart permitted him:

"Say, sure! sure! Get you a jawb, I guess, why sure! Why didn't you call around sooner? Always at your service, old son."

"I have had some big engagements in the theatrical

line, and I'm going in for writing, too—novels and plays. I have a few terrific ideas for plays. I expect to make a few hundred thousand dollars out of them."

"Plays, eh? Why that's a God-damned big ambition of yours. Arthur Duignan's son from Glannanea writing plays for John Drew or Arnold Daly! Plays — for the love of Mike!"

Martin, with the false pride of Ireland, was attempting to be big here, just as Joe Reilly had tried to make himself big back in Ireland, but each was now becoming rapidly naked in the eyes of the other. . . Suddenly Joe made an heroic attempt to recover the attitude out of which he had been knocked by the talk of this youngster from Glannidan.

"Say, I just recollect, I have influence in the theatrical line — vaudeville. I can get you a jawb."

Suddenly Martin saw him stride down the bar towards a man who, from his appearance might be a scene-lifter at a ten cent picture house with Vaudeville turns.

"Tell the kid to call around on Monday," he heard the man shouting.

Joe came back, gave him the address of the picture-house and told him to call around there on Monday. Then he stood him a few more drinks, gave him a handful of cigars, and just as he was about to leave slipped a five-dollar bill into his hand.

"Now, son, if you're writing home to your mother, or to anyone in Glannidan, you'll say that you met Joe Reilly in New York and that he's some big pot out there, got you a jawb, and all that sort of thing."

That night he spent the five dollars on Kitty, and she tried to be kinder to him than she had been for many a day. Yet her chatter only sounded distantly to his

ears. . . One moment he blamed himself for accepting a mean job from the like of Joe Reilly, because it seemed such a definite attack upon his great ambition, and the next he blamed himself for not having looked for such a position sooner. . . But the struggle between hunger and imagination had already been decided within him.

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## VII

HE felt, somehow, that he must remove from his present environment, because it was odorous of the theatre and continuously within it did he breathe the poison of his dream. He had fallen into acquaintance with a few of the boarders in this house in 45th Street, and he had often stopped to chat with them for a moment in the hallway, or go at their invitation for a drink to the saloon across the street. Their talk and the general atmosphere was but a poor imitation of the fine literary scenes which had been created in the company of Arthur Nicholson's players. He did not care to spend so much time with Kitty in their room now. She was always sewing, or else doing some work of that kind, continually musing over a writing-pad as if striving to make up her mind to write to someone. . . . Yet still that curious affectionate sympathy which comes to two who suffer together had fallen upon them and they seemed to know a certain happiness. She had grown so quiet, too. In Dublin it had been impossible to please her whims, but now she seemed very grateful for the smallest kindness. She grew more and more remote from the grimy scene which had enveloped her, and it often appeared as she sang a snatch of an old song that she was back again in that quiet parsonage in England, and that all the shame had fallen away from her. . . . Often as he listened, Martin's mind would turn back to Glannidan in an attempt to catch the beauty of his young years. In an occasional moment of mad fancy he thought of going back there

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with her when he had won through his present difficulties, which he was going to face like a man, in the job that Joe Reilly had got for him, on the following Monday.

"Martin Duignan, be the holy farmer! Did you hear what Martin Duignan done over in the States; married a Protestant, begad, a minister's daughter, no less?"

The enormous offence it might seem to the good people of Glannidan and Glannanea was at once sufficient to prevent him seeing himself married, or letting on to be married, and bringing her into the house where his mother and sister lived with his sister's child. . . Yet in the face of all this dark impossibility he grew strangely kinder and more kind to Kitty. . . . On Monday he was beginning. . . But it seemed too late now, for frequently she turned away from him and went on with her attempt to write upon the pad. . . . Once he saw it where she had thrown it down upon rushing with unaccountable suddenness from his presence. It contained a columnar list of dates beginning some weeks back and continuing down to the date upon which he knew her allowance would next come due. The days that had already passed were neatly ticked off. Then, inside, and still untorn from the pad, was a letter phrased in the form of a confession and containing a full record of the way of her life since she had left her husband. . . It seemed hard to think that any man could have her back now; she must eventually drift and drift until the streets had claimed her. Yet through her great sorrow might come a great forgiveness. . . He saw, for the first time, in this note, too, how she had loved him, and yet did

he feel a powerful disgust for her immediately. . . Next day with their poor belongings they took a street car, and getting off near Central Park took up lodging in a miniature room in a Harlem flat. . . It would be nearer his work, Martin thought, and away from the cursed atmosphere which had only dragged him down and down. . .

On the Monday when he went to his work it was with no great enthusiasm. All the way across to the east side street, where the Vaudeville house was, he could not help thinking that he had once gone into saloons with his big frieze coat, which was the very nearest approach to a fur coat, and drank and smoked cigars with the best of them "after the show." Now he was about to become worse, or at least lower in his own estimation and in the social scale, than those stage labourers he had seen in the theatre where he had played small parts with Arthur Nicholson's Company. . . An old, queer dread came to him. . . Would anyone who had known him in Glannidan or in Dublin see him now? . . .

At last he stood at the stage door of the "Champion" Vaudeville. When he went in the man who was sweeping the stage thought, through a cloud of dust, that he was a "star," who had strayed into the wrong theatre. The brush dropped out of his hand when he explained that he was the man who had been recommended for the job by Joe Reilly. . . The man, however, immediately recovered his assurance and his nationality and ordered Martin to pick up the brush and to go on with his sweeping of the stage! . . .

It was here and now that he thought of Ellen O'Connor, thought of her, too, with a great rush of regard that

would not be suddenly darkened by the murkiness of this place. He had written to her only once since his coming to America, just after he had got the short engagement with Arthur Nicholson's company. She had sent him what he considered a beautiful reply, and out of it he had imagined a short study. He fancied that she had come out to America and entered into the rough, crude life there. He pictured her lover, himself, for the moment unable to rise himself, meeting her in this setting. Their confusion for the moment, and then the sudden and penultimate unveiling of their souls. . . He sent it to one of the New York evening papers, and for a week or so bought the paper every evening in the hope of seeing his name in print at the bottom of a piece of writing about Ellen. But it had not appeared, and he had almost forgotten it until now.

This was another definite circle of his hell. It was one of those small American Vaudeville houses whose performance continues for ever. . . It began at eleven in the morning and continued till eleven at night. The material for vulgar laughter had to be manufactured at a fearful rate to supply value for the money of the crowds which poured into the place continuously. There were ten "turns," each of which came on fourteen times a day. These turns were alternated by pictures.

It was Martin's work to set the stage for the turns, some of which carried a great number of properties as well as some heavy scenery. It was like the work of sailors. The man who helped him had been a sailor and called the place a "ship." The sweat dripped from them in the close atmosphere. Continually the sound of the stage-manager shouting harsh commands



was about them, while around them stood or waited the painted men and women in flashy clothes awaiting their turns. . . Sometimes a comedienne would gaze at him from out the dressing-rooms beneath the stage with wide pencilled eyes. But he had no leisure in which to fully realise the degradation into which he had fallen. Then something happened which recalled him to realisation of his personality. In the second half of the week there was a certain "show" which required the assistance of two "supers" and the other man and he were employed at the rate of four dollars for the half week to become part of the turn. . . Their make-up consisted of something like a compromise between the nakedness of a South Sea Islander and the clownishness of a Stage Irishman. The sailor did not seem to feel it and the extra four dollars came in useful, but to Martin it was the infinite torture. To be compelled to do it fourteen times a day. . . At the end of the first day he was like a man gasping for air. He hurried on his great coat. He would drink this night, drink surely as he had never drunk before. He rushed into the first saloon and bought pint after pint of beer. . . . Then even through this queer method of recovery he began to feel some of the manhood returning. But there was torture raging like a burning forest through his mind. . . He picked up a paper and there was the short study, *The End of the Dream*, which his thought of Ellen had led him to write. . . His eyes became suddenly luminous as he read. This little thing was like manna falling on his mind. . . He read and re-read it as he stood there with his glass of beer before him. . . Here was something that plucked him from his hell and it was through Ellen it was happening.

. . . He could go home to Kitty in a great ecstasy to-night, but he could not tell her of Ellen. . . These were the two flames of his life which must remain for ever hidden from one another by the cloudy barrier, which was himself. . .

Yet, presently his mood took a turn which produced a different result. He got quite drunk, more soddenly drunk than he had ever before been. He was scarcely able to reach home. He slept on the floor, and early in the morning Kitty awoke him and looked down pityingly into his face. He did not go to work that day. About noon he called at the ticket office of the "Champion" Vaudeville and collected what money was due to him. After spending a short while in a saloon he went on to the Metropolitan Library and remained there writing until far on in the evening.

## VIII

NOW came the complete collapse of Martin. With the few dollars he had earned at the "Champion" Vaudeville he did not pay the debts already contracting rapidly with his new landlady, but bought instead a fountain pen and a number of writing pads, which he made admirable attempts to blacken in the Metropolitan Library. He bought all the evening papers and searched them through, but never another sketch of his made an appearance. The torment of the damned *litterateur* became his portion. . .

Then a startling thing happened. He saw the preliminary notice of a forthcoming play, and the news almost blinded him as he read it, for it was one of his own ideas put into the form of a play by a clever man who turned out melodramas. This must be one of the ideas he had spoken of to Joe Reilly. But he could scarcely remember, so thick was the haze about his mind, whether or not he had submitted it in scenario form to some of the theatrical managers. Perhaps it was that he had merely thought or dreamt of it simultaneously with this man who had written it. Good Lord! Why had not he written it first? This fellow who turned out melodramas by the yard would make a pot of money out of it. . . In that event, if he had only been so lucky, he saw himself acting the man by Kitty. He saw his dream being realised for love of Ellen; he saw himself in splendour before the people of Glannidan. A terrible sense of loss by turns overcame him and urged him. It worked on his brain.

He wrote to the author and the manager, and even attempted to get his case taken up by the papers, but without success. He met Ignatius Nolan again, and, having told him the story, the two would spend the greater part of the day in saloons cursing the luck that had prevented one of them from being an actor and the other from winning fame as a playwright. It was the theatre that had broken both of them, yet they could never stop talking about it. Nolan brought him over half the city, introducing him to bar-tenders and to subsided and lost actors. He became known in the circle of Nolan's queer friends as Mr. Martin Duignan, the lost playwright. Those, even most distantly connected with the theatre, evidently did not believe him, and he did not believe the lofty stories they told of their sometime glory. . . This was the continual scene which Ignatius Nolan created for their individual torture round him and them, but because of his immense enthusiasm for the stage and because he really knew nothing of its inner meaning he believed both in Martin and in the others.

"Now you just watch me! I'll show New York City and the whole United States of America who's the real author of *The Sybil and the Sphinx* when it comes to be produced. You just wait! I'll get it over on that cheap guy who sneaked your play."

Martin used to smile wearily at this repeated affirmation of Nolan's trust in him and wonder vaguely what this poor semi-illiterate hanger-on of the stage could do before the might of the lurid press, the arrogance of theatrical managers and the pride of successful authorship. But Martin became mildly excited in the knowledge that he would certainly do something. . .

So on the night before the production of the play in New York he was not surprised to see Nolan come into their favourite saloon with a roll of slips in his hand and the pockets of his overcoat bulged with a paste-pot on one side and a brush, with a long collapsible handle in the other. These were the accessories of the thing he was going to do.

They went out and pasted the slips, which caused the announcement to read, "*The Sybil and the Sphinx* by Martin Duignan," over as many posters as they could see, without unduly attracting the attention of policemen or passers by. . . Then they went into saloon after saloon as long as Ignatius Nolan's money lasted, and emerged to parade past the altered posters feeling like two lords, the real author of the successful new play and his friend moving distantly as fame would permit them among the throng.

He was still babbling drunken nonsense about his greatness when he went into the little room where he lived with Kitty. Although it was very late she was standing before the looking-glass gazing deep as it were into the hell of punishment which was mirrored in her eyes. There were lines of weariness about her mouth and her complexion was beginning to lose the last trace of its bloom.

"Oh, dear, dear," she sighed for the thousandth time. "I'm growing old, I'm fading away."

"Old," he laughed, his mind suddenly falling down to realisation of his body's condition; "old, what has that got to do with it; which is worse, age or hunger?"

She did not heed him, but went on lamenting.

"Oh, if Edmund saw me now, why he'd scarcely know his bride."

"Edmund and his bride," he sneered, coarsely. "I wish to the Lord God I had left you, my precious darling, with your loving Edmund."

There was something exceedingly brutal, something of supreme disregard in his words. The whole, tremendous adventure of their elopement had suddenly narrowed down to a question of her desire for beauty and adornment as opposed to his hunger, a mere matter of selfishness, a triumph for the elemental desire in both of them. . . .

She had not been supremely disgusted with him until this moment, for in his efforts to provide for her, queer and poor though they were, he showed that he was not altogether without appreciation of all she had done for him, her brave struggle with the trustees of her little property to get what paid for their tickets to America, the fact that she had given him the few dollars she was possessed of on landing and, later, pawned her dead mother's very beautiful ring to save him from hunger . . . full of remembrance of all these things and with her beauty robbed from her, she spoke angrily to him now. She had remembered the days before they had planned this trip to America, and with this recollection the pictorial idea of America had returned, and she spoke with wild bitterness.

"Kitty," he pleaded, suddenly chilled by her anger into realisation, "I'm hungry, leave me be."

"No, you're not hungry, you're only drunk, you big, filthy beast, and isn't it a fine thing when a great, big strong fellow like you can't make enough money to buy anything for his wife."

"You're not my wife."

There was no sound of pity in his flat, dull voice,

nothing save an immense power to wound her. She turned on him with her fierce dark eyes, and there in that little room she tortured and tortured him until his soul writhed in extremest agony. She had given him everything, all that a woman can give a man, and what return had he made her, nothing save age and loneliness and the immense beastliness of this little room.

And now the little love that had managed to linger on ended here, and the succeeding days were unwarmed by any ray of affection. As he slunk home of an evening, after an empty day, he knew very well that the sad, tired face would be looking out for him with a look of sullen anger in her dark eyes. . . It came at last one evening after he had stumbled home, even thus, half silly with hunger and disappointment. She said she was leaving him; she was returning to Edmund Haymer, if he would have her back again.

"That is, if he will have me back now that I have been ruined by you," she said, imparting an unnecessary bitterness to the simple statement of intention.

"You are quite sure he does not know about me, I mean," asked Martin, still not without some concern for her happiness.

"No, my plans were brilliant, because I loved you, I suppose, for all it has brought me to this. He wrote to me the other day, and it seems that the story of my theatrical engagement and my stay with friends has never since been doubted by him. You have never once entered into his calculations. At any rate he seemed just glad to get rid of me. You know by a lucky chance I said four months, although I surely thought then that I could stay with you for ever.

Doubtless he has already begun to pick himself up in anticipation of my return, the beast."

Henceforth they were to one another as strangers from far countries. . . As the weary weeks, until the day she had named for her going, passed slowly he began to care less and less for her company and he would often come home very late after having spent the night in vainly trying to bury his mood in some of the low saloons of Fourth Avenue. . . She would often wake up suddenly as he came in, and say:

"Is that Edmund?" But he would answer gruffly, drunkenly: "No, it is I, Martin!" as if angry to the last that some spark of kind concern for his existence did not remain with her. She saw that he was daily falling deeper and deeper into the slough. She seemed very glad of his misery, and often laughed loudly on Sundays when she saw him trying to suck some joy out of a Sabbath newspaper. . .

But the day of her departure from America and the ending of it drew swiftly nearer. He was continuously reminded of it by the time-table she kept by her bedside with the number of days decreasing daily between America and "her dearest Edmund." The irony of the term of endearment! How many thousand times had she told Martin how she loathed the man? It was her stories of the brute's cruelty that had helped to finally entangle him with this wife of another. . . He fell to wondering what kind of parting they would make of it between them.



## IX

**T**HE little sum which was to take her back to England had at last come, and with it the eve of their parting. She was full of eagerness to get away from the little room which beheld the obscenity of their quarrels and recriminations. . . He carefully packed her few faded belongings in their old theatrical basket and got an express man to take it down to the docks for fifty cents. She paid the landlady, and they went out together to buy the ticket back to England. It was not the intention of either of them to return ever again to the little room. He suggested that it would be more convenient to stop at a small hotel in 45th Street.

There was good heat in the room that was given them and it filled them with a sense of comfort and decency; as he looked around, after vainly striving to realise his present position, the quiet pattern of the wall-paper led his mind into the way of flat, oppressive thought. . . There rushed across his mind the whole story of his years, so bent and warped by his connection with this woman. But it was their last night together and he had resolved to be truly magnanimous. He could not keep himself from regarding her half tenderly. She made the best possible attempt to adorn herself, and there was about her the rare brightness of other lovely nights and other lovely days.

As she looked into his face she seemed of a sudden to grow weary of the hatred she had worked up against him. It had been his misfortune to meet with her, and but for the pity of their meeting he might still be

the romantic figure she had known. She kissed him, saying she was sorry, awfully sorry. Would he be so very kind as to forgive her? They grew suddenly so compassionate of one another. She came and sat upon the arm of his chair and ran her thin, delicate fingers through his hair. She bent low again to kiss him and he saw very clearly the little lines which had begun to deepen around her eyes. It was he who had done that furrowing for he had considered her of unblemished beauty on the first night they had met in Dublin.

She was going from him now because he had made that beauty fade; she was returning to the other brute from whom he thought he had so gallantly helped her to escape. . . Their sorrow became rapidly apparent to one another. She turned away to gaze, half vacantly, upon the meagre comfort of the little room and to think upon the coldness of the sea. . .

"I think I'll stay," she said.

Her words smote his ears with a sense of shock. He had been somehow glad since the day she had made up her mind to leave America, glad for her sake, glad for his own. She might regain a little happiness back in England, and he might be better when he was away from her. But this return to her old desire of him after he had tried to quench the last spark of affection for her was something he could not understand. He did not reply.

"You wish me to go back to Edmund, and I want so badly to remain here with you. Is there no more hope of that now?"

"None," he said, and his tones were final in their ring; "where would be the sense in living it all over again. It has been pretty beastly, you know."

"It has been awful, dearest Martin, but now the thought has come to me that I am not quite strong enough for the journey. I have ever had a strange, lonely horror of the sea."

"But, what about the second-cabin passage you have just purchased? It would be a lot of money to waste. Have you thought of that?"

"I have," she said, disappointed cruelly by his question. "But what is such a little consideration at all if only we could love in the fine, fierce way of old."

"It is just the means that make such considerations that might have helped us to retain that love."

There was such a queer turn of bitterness in his every word. She was crying, and clutching his cheek with her hand.

"I'm afraid," she sobbed. "Oh! I'm awfully afraid of the sea and of what is beyond the sea. Oh, Martin, I am really."

"You're not ill?"

"No, but I'm dreadfully afraid that I am going to be ill. I have the strangest fancies about myself. A month ago I should have seen a doctor."

"You can see the ship's doctor to-morrow."

Why was he still so hopelessly cruel? But in spite of it all she talked on to him, trying hard to fan the old love into some kind of little flickering flame, while he endeavoured to quench it with his every word. Suddenly she almost screamed with the painful suggestion of a sudden thought.

"What if I were going to—— Oh, you know, Martin, what should I do then?"

He laughed loud and long.

"Ridiculous!" he at last managed to jerk out. . . .

But there was a light upon her face now and she

seemed of a sudden to be of great power and significance in his life. He began to grow afraid of the bond that still seemed to tie them even in their last moments together. What if it had grown to such strength as she had just suggested? The blasting punishment of it would be certain to envelop his whole life. . .

All through the night as she remained very near him for the last time, she implored him to allow her to remain. But he merely laughed and tried to put the idea away from her. She cried out in her dread that something beyond the world was telling her to remain, but he would sigh away with horrible insistence that it was better for them to part. . . She whispered, pleadingly, how this feeling of impending illness had been growing upon her for some time and how strange things had happened to her physically. . . She could not imagine what they meant, unless . . . unless. . . Then she attempted to create for his torture again all the torturing thoughts that had come to him on all the nights he had stayed away from her, swilling in the saloons of Fourth Avenue. He told her, not without a certain tearfulness in his tones, that the bare idea of her sufferings had never entered his mind.

"And it always seemed a kind of funny that you were never able to pay a doctor to tell me what was wrong. I used to be thinking over that all the time you were away. . ."

At length, worn out by their torment of one another, they dropped into a fitful slumber. They would start up quite suddenly every hour or so to have a look at one another and to behold the fearful reflections of the sin which still bound them. He rose at six and made what preparations were necessary for departure. She awakened painfully, and looked at him with disappoint-

ment in her eyes. . . How dreadfully anxious he appeared for her departure? She did not feel any desire to go at all, but he was soon by her side telling her the time. She glanced lovingly towards him in a final, stricken appeal, but he did not seem to notice or to understand. Then she rose, an infinite weariness hanging on her every movement, and put on her faded fineries. He thought she looked quite ill in the morning light. They were soon ready. He took up the two tattered suit-cases which held her poor belongings, even to the photograph of Edmund Haymer, and hurried downstairs. A man they met in the hall viewed them askance, but they reached the street in safety and turned into Eighth Avenue.

"About breakfast?" he said.

His possessions in money amounted to about a dollar. It was his intention to buy a decent breakfast for her before they went down to the steamer. So far he had not begun to wonder where the money was going to come from when she had returned to England. He had none with which to seek new lodgings; he had no prospect of employment and he had no allowance. They walked into a quick-lunch restaurant and he ordered a substantial breakfast. Whatever might be the cause, whether it was the rare spectacle of Martin buying good food for himself and her, or else the feeling of nausea surviving from his abominable callousness of the night before, she did not rightly know what made her eat scarcely any of the fine and unusual meal. She observed with infinite disgust how comfortably and how greedily he devoured his plateful.

"Do you mind?" he said, putting over his knife and fork and taking what remained of her portion.

"Dirty beggar!" she said.

"It may seem a disgusting thing to do, but I have really no notion where the next meal is coming from."

He said this with a complete absence of emotion, his eyes fixed upon the bit of meat before him.

Soon they were in a street car on their way to the steamer. . . He assisted her across the gangway and down below. She looked weak, and said that she felt very cold. He arranged her few things just before the stewardess came in to answer a lot of questions. . . It might be some time before they could start as the fog in the river was dense and dangerous. . . Yes it would be possible to see the ship's doctor presently. . . . When she heard this she clung to Martin and asked him to wait and hear what was the medical opinion of her condition. . . Reluctantly he gave his word that he would, but just then the order was given for all visitors to go ashore. . .

He remained for a long time looking fixedly at the spot on the deck where he had left her. Before his vacant eyes lay a muddy ooze of musing. . . After what seemed an interminable time the ship began to move away. Then, through the thick veil of sorrowful stupidity which overhung the bitterness of his mind he saw her appear, her hands outstretched to him, almost theatrically, in a last wild appeal. . . She had seen the doctor. Then it was true. . . When the startled, beseeching look in her eyes met the look in his, which was lifeless, pitiless, she fainted and was carried below by two women and a steward. . . He turned up his coat collar and was soon lost among the drab crowd in Fourteenth Street. . .

As soon as his mind returned to realisation he felt

that he had reached the end of a definite episode in his life. It would seem to have taken all this muddy and mean adventure to fully express and then to end some dark streak of the personality he had taken from the clay. It might be that the giant hand of Fate had merely projected this woman into his life so that he might shed the brute in himself away. . . But he had almost exceeded the realistic possibilities of himself; he had made himself a character, as it were, out of some beastly Russian novel. He had made himself supremely unworthy of all the beauty which Dublin and the Tower, with the affection almost of another mother, had sought to crowd into his life. He felt as if the love of the Earth mother and the Art mother for him had torn his life between them. But he knew of a certainty beyond all doubts and fears that the pagan in him had already begun to dwindle down to ashes, for now all the darkened places of his memory had become suddenly illuminated. He was thinking of the night that his fateful resolve had come to him before the mirror in the Tower and of how the great lines of Francis Thompson had been sounding with such sweet music in his ears at the very same moment:

I fled Him down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him down the arches of the years;

I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways,

Of my own mind and in the midst of tears

I hid from Him. . .

And was he hiding still, and was he still pursued? He felt that his face must wear the look of a fugitive again as he hurried on to be lost in the throngs. And he knew not through what vicissitudes of the soul he might still have to pass. . .

## X

HE fell lower now. Ignatius Nolan used to bring him scraps from his dinner in his pocket and give them to him late at night as they would be drinking in some of the saloons of Fourth Avenue. . . There was upon him a kind of wretched recklessness. Often when Ignatius had failed to bring anything in his pocket, and as he crossed to the free-lunch counter of the saloon there he would take a glance into the long mirrors inset in the walls to observe the change that had so rapidly come upon his very soul. It seemed that he still looked handsome in the eyes of others, for people passing up or down the floor of the saloon would often stop and gaze as if arrested by his striking appearance; even Kitty, on the night before they parted had praised his good looks, but this was not the Martin Duignan that he saw as he crossed over to the free-lunch counter to take scraps of broken food from it. He saw himself marked as it were by the sinful mess he had made of his life. He thought of Wilde, and *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, and laughed to himself as the fancy struck him again and again. . . Then back again to the company of damnable fools which his curious association with Ignatius Nolan had helped to gather around him.

"Nine years ago, when I was an actor at the Broadway Teeayther."

"Martin, here, is the real author of the play that's making the big success at the New Republic Teeayther."



"Yeah!"

"Yeah!"

Then a flow of putrid stage talk, so long as the beer kept flowing. Later the roaring streets, the cold and the "Millington Hotel." In some cities of America they build their doss-houses upon a huge scale, and fit them up with all modern equipments, but still they are merely doss-houses for the accommodation of the creatures that once were men. As he went in and out of this place it appeared to Martin that he possessed very little life within himself, that he was merely a creature of impulse, moving blindly. . . Often he would go into the writing room and taking over to his hand some of the sheets of free notepaper he would begin to set down some of the thoughts of his autobiography. Always, however, they were coloured, and finally darkened by thoughts of Kitty and of the long night which had fallen upon his life. . . But he forgave her even though he could feel the chains she had forged for him still about his mind. It seemed so recently that he had known her in the springtime of his ambitions. She had drawn him nearer to his vision of pagan beauty. . . . That was when his mother had written asking what he was doing then. . . He remembered all that so clearly in the light of the second letter which had come from his mother. . . The thirty-first cousin of someone from Glannidan had run away with the daughter of Lowry Pigeon, the tailor, and both were doing well in New York. "Doing great" was the phrase which Martin half-humorously remembered Lowry had used to describe Jane and her man. . . Well, she had seen whom she took to be Martin upon the stage of a grand theatre, and she had written home

about it to Lowry. . . Lowry had evidently received the news with pleasure. It gave him scope to cut the ground from under some of Mary Duignan's bragging. . . . Play-acting, that was not much of a life, and his mother always prating about him at the egg carts on a Friday as she sold her eggs. There she would be, a big hat upon her and a rusty shawl, telling them breathlessly, of the great job that Martin had just got in America while at the very same moment her heart was sick and sore with worrying for the future of the little homestead in Glannanea. . . . But she would seem to flatter her mind into forgetfulness as she talked agitatedly to Glennon the eggman, and the other women crowded around the carts. . . . Then the talk of Lowry Pigeon gabbling to the crowd who filled his shop in the evenings had broken in upon her dream. . . .

And so because of that the mother had cried out to the son across the world: "Play-acting again, is that what you're at, Martin? Now, sure, that will ruin you. I'm near sure that's what ruined you in Dublin, so it was. I'm never done dreaming about you, and even though you refused me the last time, I'm going to ask you to come home again, son. We're hard set here for a bit of help. Sure you may depend on me to say that it's for the good of your health and everything that you're after coming home. For all he's such a grand man, God bless him! I knew Father Clarke was making a mistake and he sending you off to be a scholar, you that had the breed of the farmer in you although your father was terrible fond of books."

Translated thus from the queer, illiterate scrawl that they were he read many times the sentences which constituted this letter from his mother as he sat there

in the writing-room of the Millington Hotel in New York City. . . The clerk at the desk was turning his cigar with his tongue and calling to him. . .

His presence was required at the desk for a moment; another letter had just come re-addressed to him from Ignatius Nolan's address which he had sent to his mother and given to Kitty. It was from Kitty, and the eyes leaped wildly in his head as he read:

" . . . I have been to see another doctor, too, in Liverpool, and there's no doubt about it, Martin. . . Edmund will never have me back now. . . But it's lovely, all the same, to think that it is for you, and you'll come to me, won't you, darling? I am staying at the Y.W.C.A. in Liverpool, but yesterday they gave me notice to leave. I don't know why, excepting, I suppose, that the signs are beginning to be heavy upon me. . . Oh! darling, please come. If you have no money you'll work your passage, now, won't you? Anything, only come to be with me then. They'll know of my whereabouts here when you arrive. Oh! come, dearest Martin, come!"

He rose as one stunned into a condition of almost lifelessness and went out into the streets of New York. Gone now was his hope of life and beauty for ever. . . How were these two letters now calling him away from America. . . Was it to be back to the clean freshness of the fields or back to Kitty? Here were the voices of the two women calling to him across the void of his sorrow and for such different reasons but with the same elemental fact trembling at the root of both their loves. . .

He slipped past a few theatres which in their darkened state of the daytime had some of the dead daylight

look of prostitutes. Yet it was in one of these very places that the play he thought had been stolen from him was making thousands of dollars nightly while he had poor clothes on him and the small ways of life were still calling, calling. His head was bowed low upon his chest when someone good-naturedly slapped him on the back. It was Arthur Nicholson. Although a poet he looked prosperous in his big fur coat. He walked upright like a man in curious contrast to the shrinking, defeated figure of Martin. The story of Martin and the lost play had been dragged down to the level of a mere pot-house tradition in the saloons of Fourth Avenue but Arthur Nicholson was prepared to look at the matter somewhat differently; because he saw where the glimmer of genius lay in Martin. . . Immediately their talk was of the stage and of this misfortune. There were kindly gleams in the poet's eyes as he listened, and in the music of his voice there was a golden sympathy. . . Martin felt as if this other was seeing the real truth of his soul through the almost divine sympathy of the artist.

Arthur Nicholson saw with a clearness which was not for the eyes of common men the abyss of destruction now gaping wide before this other who had fluttered moth-like around the flame. This saloon crawling was rapidly developing what was merely his misfortune into something which might come to be characterized later as the fine art of sponging when, with a theatrical swagger, and the full jargon of the stage, he would come round the stage doors of nights to negotiate loans of five dollars or so. This would be a terrible fate, thought Arthur, for one who had seen sufficient

of the world's beauty to write *The Sybil and the Sphinx*, or at least to evolve the idea from which it had been written. Strange, although the plays he had brought with him to America were literature, he had made a considerable amount of money out of them. Now he was going back to a quiet cottage in one of the hills of Dublin to write the poems, and was this young man who had seen a greater beauty than even he to be doomed to this sad condemnation. . . His poems in praise of the beauty of the world must henceforth be the merest lies if he did not hold out a helping hand for this poor, fallen one was his brother in the kinship of art.

They turned into a shipping office. Scarcely seeming to realise the meaning of it, Martin saw Arthur Nicholson take some bills from a roll and hand them across the counter to a little weazened clerk who was chewing gum. As distantly remembered names he heard the words Ireland, Belfast and Dublin. . . Dublin! It suddenly appeared that many brave things had happened there. Dublin, that lovely place of light and beauty, where Ellen would meet him in the lamplit streets and they would talk again of plays and poetry and the hills of Dublin. Yes, Dublin was surely the place where he might re-habilitate himself. . . He had visions of walking with her towards the hills again on bright, idyllic evenings and on Sundays which would be all adoration. . . It seemed very strange that it was Ellen who was calling him back now and not either of the two who had so recently written to him, neither she who was bound to him by birth nor she who was bound to him by sin. The very thought seemed to give him a startling and swift interest in life. It brought

him a surge of hope, too, which sang in his heart while Arthur Nicholson was doing this thing because the poet had seen that he had still some possibilities. . . For her, or because of her, he might yet do great things. . .

Later Nicholson brought him to a grand hotel and entertained him to a costly supper. Yet it was the free tribute of one man to another, and he never even made him faintly feel under a compliment. In a bright moment it reminded Martin of another incident in literary history when Yeats met the author of *The Playboy* in Paris and turned his steps towards the Aran Islands, for this man too was equal to the loftiness of the thing he was doing. He was rescuing the makings of a writer from this place where there was neither light nor literature, nor happiness, nor hope, and sending him to Ireland where there was the essence and the making of all these things. . . They were very lords of language as they sat smoking good cigars amid the grandeur. Nicholson recited some of his best poems, and in return Martin told him the plots of plays and stories with which it was his intention yet to enrich the world. And even as they talked they conceived further beauty for the glory of inspiration was again their portion. . . The poet was not returning to Ireland just yet, but when he did he hoped Martin would call to see him at his cottage in the hills. . . "And you'll give up pub-crawling, like a good fellow," he said at parting.

Next morning as he stood upon the deck of the ship that was to carry him to Ireland he thought more clearly among many other things of his own play, *The Sybil and the Sphinx*, and wondered why he should have

thought of writing a play around the idea that life on this earth is but one act of the many act drama of the dream of personality towards the achievement of reality. . . It seemed at once queer and at the same time perfectly reasonable to think that everything that had already happened to him, even the beastly actuality of this sojourn in America was but part of a dream. . . Yet was there a sorrow upon him even in the moment of his tremendous thought—a powerful regret for some part of himself that had died. . . His regret seemed the only reality about him until Ignatius Nolan, that vague man, came running up the gangway to shake his hand at parting. In some quite unaccountable way he had got wind of his going. . . Just then the gangway was removed, and seeing him standing so sadly still upon the wharf a few seconds later, Martin thought that Nolan looked curiously like himself on that morning that Kitty had gone down to the sea.

END OF BOOK III

**BOOK IV**  
**THE MAN**





## BOOK IV

## THE MAN

## I

MARTIN was not sorry to leave behind that jumbling together of great facts which was represented by America. But the roar of it was still in his ears and the dazzling show of it was still in his eyes. . . Sometimes he went to the place where a bronzed man passed out exorbitantly priced drinks through a hole. Already was he beginning to lose a portion of the money that remained from the roll of bills which Arthur Nicholson had passed to him after he had purchased a ticket which would take him to Londonderry and Belfast and Dublin. It had been very kind of the poet although the ticket only carried him steerage.

Sometimes the sea looked so blue and cold, yet with a curious invitation upon its face after he had made a vain attempt to win forgetfulness. . . Drowning seemed as easy as any other way out of it, but even as he resolved upon the accomplishment of his own ending some unexpected light of his ambition would present itself. He would touch some spring of character in one of his fellow-passengers or see some curl of beauty in the lift of the waves that made a painter's vision to his poet's eye.

On the boat he was meeting rough, uncouth men

who were enjoying the adventure of the passage, who relished the coarse food they were given, and who saw nothing that was an offence in the way they had to sleep and wash and perform the other different functions of the body. But to Martin there was something exceedingly gross about every circumstance of it, particularly when he contrasted it with all he remembered of his crossing with Kitty. He had had leisure then and an opportunity of thinking and writing and reading, of even acting the part of W. B. Yeats, with his big, knotted tie, his long stride and his hands entwined behind him. Now he was so much the subject for a character sketch, a character sketch still of a grossly realistic kind, such as he had often met with in a Russian novel. His clothing was now in a state of sad decay, but mercifully, his coat, his great artistic coat, still hid him. Sometimes he would take a peep at his few other soiled belongings, especially at the collar that Kitty had once made an attempt to make up. It was stiff and thick and brown with starch. Yet had Kitty once been a conductor of ecstasy in this world. Her body had brought delight through his eyes and his body, the poor shell of clay that now housed his torment, had become vibrant with the beauty of passion. He shuddered at the thought that he was still moving nearer to her. . .

But on the morning that he caught sight of Ireland, the old, beloved country, the surge of youth and beauty rose in him again, calling upon his ambition to make him greater than he had been. It seemed in this moment that he owed his country something. It was there that he had been born, and there seemed something suddenly akin to him in the very nature of the fields.

There were men in Ireland too whose loves, whether in literature or labour, were all clean and unsullied, but his had been carried into life upon the lusts of clay. . .

The landing at Derry was quite uneventful, his wait for a few hours without incident. It was only when he sat in the train going through the dark night that his mind began to turn again in such a way as to show that he was still portion of a certain reality. He opened the bag which held his soiled collars and his other things and took out the bits of the book he had been so long striving to write. . . It all seemed so sketchy, so incomplete. . . He remembered all the books he had read, the novels, and thought upon their ordered completeness, exhibiting the peace and leisure in which their authors must have set about their work. Not so he. He did not seem to know where to begin, and as the train sped southward he took a pencil from his pocket and began to write. Already was he the *litterateur* again in Ireland, but there was something almost pathetically incoherent in the lines he began to scribble under the heading "Foreword."

"I, Martin Duignan, sit me down in a kind of despair to write what I must say about the world and to give to those who have leisure to read some idea of the strange adventures of the spirit through which the mortal and immortal parts of me have passed. For the deeds of the body colour the life of the soul. It has taken me all the years of my life to learn this truth, but I know it now. Oh! would that the knowledge had come as it comes to saner and happier mortals, and then my life might now be a less fearful thing to see as I now see it. But it pleased the Lords of Life and


Death to make an example of me. No man knows my story, and no man might ever know, but then I might have fallen short of the example for which I was intended. If only I could shock people into a full appreciation of my degradation, then I might have some comfort in thinking that my extraordinary life had not been lived in vain."

It was a poor, weak beginning. It seemed to offend against all the canons of art as he had learned them at the Tower, from Séan O'Hanlon in their conversation, and from seeing Pearse and McDonagh in the National Library, from Phelim O'Brien and the unpublished critics of "The Daffodils." He knew the word that must be used to describe it if ever it came to be read by those vehement men, an ugly obscene word which might sometimes be seen scrawled on the walls of urinals. . . . He searched further and found another attempt to set down his life in the form of an autobiography written out as a novel in which he was the leading character. He read:

"Those curious sufferings from his eighteenth year onwards seemed to have twisted his mind a little in the direction of morbid callousness which I can now excuse and see as something altogether different in the light of the confession of these pages. 'I am a weakling, I know very well that I lack something—strength of will, I suppose,' he would often say after some particularly unlucky reverse. As he stood cowering before a world he could not understand his opinion of himself seemed true enough, but now that I have read through his own account of his life and seen in how

many phases the manuscript was blotted by tears I have viewed more clearly the heart of the man. It was a heart so filled with great good nature as to be too good for the humanity he met and the bright mind which accompanied it out of place in the sombre colour scheme which enfolded his life. His life had come to be ruined and ruined most thoroughly by influences altogether outside the true personality which was himself. And continually he would say with mournful insistence: 'There is no use in attempting a task so impossible, one cannot rebuild a broken life, but, as one waits in patience for the end, a certain amount of morbid pleasure may be derived from watching the crumbling of the ruins. There is something of comforting curiosity in such observation. But to begin again. No. The drunkard hates the one who insists on saving him from his beloved pleasure, the dreamer shrinks in loathing from the hand which would snatch him out of his imaginary paradise, and surely no one, least of all myself, would be so unkind as to take from me the means of my great enjoyment here in this little room.'

Yet in spite of all the blinding egotism of this, it would seem in odd moments, even to himself, that there might be hope in him still but for one deplorable fact. Continually it appeared that he wished to excuse the mess he had made of things on the ground that in him, beyond the common man, the flame of genius had been lit by an unseen hand. It was very queer indeed that one whose early years had been trained to the beauty of self-sacrifice should thus have his mind turned into the ways of a consuming egotism. . . And in this



moment had been given to him to see the opening of his eyes in all the beauty of Ireland and the glory it was to sacrifice oneself.

In "The Daffodils" it was supposed that a would-be writer must spend several years of hopeless drifting before he could consider himself sufficiently endowed with wisdom or vision or genius, to see "the thing" as it should be seen. These they always spoke of with affectionate experience as "the wander years." . . . Now was he returning from his wander years, and surely there was promise behind that fine brow of his across which the wind from the open window of the carriage now blew his dusky hair. He was very young, not more than twenty-two. A beautiful girl was still in love with him, and in Glannidan there were the sunlit fields of his youth to which his mother still called him. It was impossible for him to realise just yet how his mind might turn or what scheme for the future it might embrace. But there were the things that men and women had told him of his genius and there was the life he had lived. . . .

At one moment it seemed that everything must be for Ellen, at another his mother, his sister and the child would be before his mind in a phrase which was the phrase of the countryside:

"In a bad way, aye, indeed: they must be in a bad way."

He had known of sons who had done brave things to keep the old homestead still standing, and for all that the later episodes of his life might prove his cowardice, he had worked as well and as bravely as any man. It was the turning of him from his natural work that had ruined him, this and probably some legacy in the

blood from his father. His life was again trembling in the balance. . .

That morning he slept in Belfast for a few hours, and in the afternoon went on to Dublin. There settled a perfect and steady greyness upon his mind as he drew near the city, for he knew that Dublin, for good or ill, was the place from which his final decision must spring. . . When he got out at Amiens Street he left his belongings in the parcel office and went on into the city. He anxiously scanned the clocks as he hurried along to meet Ellen. He ran into George's Street, and was there just at the moment when the girls were coming out of the shop. . . One by one they tripped down the stairs and hurried out into the evening. . . And still she did not come. . . There was upon him such a fearful anxiety. . . It suddenly seemed as if he had come all the way from America to effect this meeting. . . Then one of the girls who knew him came up and said:

"Oh, Mr. Duignan, did you hear about Ellen? She left the Tower and the shop here and everything and went off to America the other day. Went off to join you out there, she said. And now, isn't it curious to think that you're back again. Did you not meet her there at all and she so dying fond of you? . . ."

There was a good deal more gabble of the same kind, but the blinding fact that continually emerged was identical—Ellen was gone from Dublin, and gone from him suddenly was his brave attempt to rehabilitate himself. . . He was dazed. . . He remembered another leave-taking after which he had gone to buy forgetfulness in a saloon on 14th Street. . . Now he almost raced in the direction of "The Daffodils."



At once, upon entering, so powerfully was the literary sense in him stirred that he was compelled to let his present sorrow slip quietly into the grey scheme of his life. . . For there were the poets, critics, artists, scholars, journalists, professors, and all the miscellaneous hangers-on of literature who might be inclusively termed "The Dublin Decadence," still in the various stages of repose in which he had left them on his last day in Dublin. . . They were sitting in exactly the same positions at the tables, taking their usual quantity of drink and contributing their customary remarks to the symposium. . . As soon as he had gulped down his first bottle of stout it seemed to Martin in a moment of sudden illumination that even as men had been caught in the cities of Pompeii and Herculæneum so had these young Irish *litterati* been caught in the lava of their immense egotism, suddenly paralysed as it were by the great gestures of Yeats and Synge and "Æ." And so, embedded in the failure of their execution, they had turned to spiteful, poisonous criticism. . . . The stout flowed as usual; the evening faded into night, yet so blindly powerful was the inner concentration of these young men that they scarcely seemed to have noticed the absence of him since his last visit. He had been more than six months in America, yet Phelim O'Brien asked suddenly:

"What night were you here last? Tuesday, was it?"

"I haven't been here for quite a long while," said Martin suddenly vexed that his presence or absence should not have been considered more important than this.

"I suppose you have been working at the book. How is it getting along?"

"Slowly," said Martin.

"Look here," said the leader of the decadents twisting his dark moustache with his womanish hands. "You're too damned distinguished looking for a man that has written so little!"

The night dwindled somehow after this fashion until all were sufficiently drunk to bring it to the usual ending. . . The nodding plumes began to pass by the window. Martin fell into chat with Gillachrist McBrady, who had been introduced to him as "the new realist in Irish." . . At closing time they staggered away together toward a doss-house on the south side of the city, Gillachrist McBrady mouthing broken English, the particular form of affectation which distinguished him, and Martin with all thought of Ellen becoming gradually blotted from his mind.

## II

AS befitted a member of the shining circle of "The Daffodils," Gillachrist McBrady was writing a book, a novel.

"This is going to be one of the greatest things since Synge," Phelim O'Brien had said, although in making this momentous pronouncement he had only the word of Gillachrist for it.

Gillachrist was merely one of these unhappy mortals who in Dublin, of all places, are soonest ruined by the possession of a little ability. Irish was his particular obsession, but with him it was not merely the knowledge of a few harmless and unnecessary words. He really meant it, and had as well the right idea about the revival of Irish, and it was this: that if a man were suddenly to write a great literary masterpiece in Irish, say a masterpiece of fiction, then he would have done more enduring work for the future of Irish than talking the biggest chunks of Irish in the hearing of people who did not know any Irish. This, of course, was an elderly idea of George Moore's, but Gillachrist said that it was original to himself.

After the dark lapse of a drunken sleep in the verminous doss-house they went down and washed amid the lashing and splashings and razor-stoppings of the common wash-house. The new Irish novelist was sick and moody, and when he spoke at all it was in gloomy and profane Gaelic. They went into the common dining-room, and soon Martin was seeing that place with the eyes of the mind of Gillachrist McBrady. . .

It was a queer place surely, this common dining-room of the doss-house, noisy, cold and gloomy, like a place out of a story by Maxim Gorky. The men in the place peered hungrily through the grey of the morning. Their heads were bent low, and they seemed unmindful of everything but the food before them on the greasy deal tables—the crude, ugly mess that men devour to keep the life in them. . . . Before them on the tables most of the eaters had a little box, a disused soap or starch box, and in this was ranged methodically a set of canisters. These numerous canisters held the raw beginnings of the food—a pinch of tea, a spoonful of sugar, a scrap of sickly-looking butter, a bit of desolate and forgotten meat. The eaters made a great bustle as they passed and repassed between the tables and the common cooking range. . . . Always as they returned to the tables with the cooked stuff the joy of their hearts sprang into their faces. Many a smile half-formed itself upon many a wan and famished face. But these looks of jubilation soon gave way to looks of resolution as they devoured the food. No man lifted his eyes more than six inches from his plate until the last few scraps remained. . . . Then, filled with food and complacency, he gazed calmly around. If his neighbour at the next table having a larger feed had not yet got right through it he would not regard him with any kind of envy; if a neighbour at the next table had nothing, the man full of new confidence would look upon him with disdain. It was queer that such a feeling should arise in his breast, but, inevitably, it would come when he began to compliment himself that, somehow or other, he had managed to get a full meal to-day, by work, by begging, by stealing. . . . The others, although the

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same broad fields were opened to them had not prospered in their endeavours. The difference in achievement was the gulf between them. One by one they arose with deliberation and proceeded to put away their eating utensils. An old pensioner who had been a cavalry man was always the first to arise. He carried himself erectly and without any suggestion of decay. His pension assured him of food, and so the bending ache of hunger had never attacked him. . . He was now being closely observed by an old withered man of seventy who shook with the fatigues of many hungers. . . There were days when this other sat looking at the pensioner with a dim smile on his face. On such days he was hungry, but the pensioner sat straight and unmoved. On days after the old man had taken a drink or two he sometimes observed the shadow of a sneer hovering around the pensioner's mouth. . . Now the present being such a moment he did a strange thing. He rose feebly from the greasy table, and taking therefrom his eating utensils proceeded to set them out in fine array upon the table. Then hurrying to the common cooking range, he made a great pretence that he was cooking something. He kept up a continual passage between the table and the range until the pensioner had finished his meal and went away from the greasy table. . . Then, as his grey smile returned, he gathered up his things, and, replacing them in the locker, went away unfilled, but triumphant. . .

The girls who sold the food seemed to have a varied experience of every customer. They sometimes saw a man throw a pound note upon the counter with a magnificent swagger, and they saw the same man a few days later begging a piece of stale bread for a half-

penny. They could always tell the amount of a man's possessions by the way in which he approached the counter. . . .

When any of the girls were dismissed for being too cheeky there was great rejoicing among the patrons of the dining-room of the doss-house. It was grand to think that the dispensers of food, some of those who had handled it and been so near to it might yet be brought down to learn the true value of the food, to desire it fiercely and strive to get it in penn'orths and ha'porths.

The dark man who mopped up the mess and put the cups and saucers back into a clean pile behind the counter also passed frequent comments upon the food and the feeders. But one man beyond all those who came here had set himself apart as a critic of the place. Another, and always the same person, accompanied him, but the latter was merely a patient listener to the criticism. The critic always took up the same seat near the counter where he could have a full view of everyone's purchase. Written clearly in his mind was a list of the articles which constituted everybody's ordinary meal, and when these happened to be exceeded or abridged he was filled with annoyance. Then, with his patient auditor, he had tried to puzzle out what had happened to the unfortunate man. Was it lack of funds? Was it loss of appetite resulting from a drunken night? Had he been suddenly left a fortune? Was it the beginning of miserliness? Had he robbed somebody? Had he got a job? As the critic observed the man's method of eating, he elaborated and confirmed his suspicions. There was yet another who might sometimes be seen hovering near the dining-

room door. He seldom entered the room. It was his continual fancy to visualise it.

"The most pathetic times in this house," he used to say, "are, first of all, when a man has to look on at the others eating and he after coming up from washing himself. Now isn't it a hard kind of a case when you have to go out to do your endeavours for the day with the thought of all the others' fine breakfasts in your mind? But, d'ye know what I'm going to tell you, it's a harder case to come in after a wet, hard day with your heart falling away from you and you not to have the price of anything to put a bit of life or fire into you at all, and then to think of stumbling up to bed with no thought in your mind but the weary, killing length of the steps."

And so each of them in turn struggled into life before the mind of Martin, their visions narrowed by their dreams of food. . . When hunger was not actually upon them the fear of foodlessness seemed to rise up an awful monster before their eyes. As they bent over the greasy tables their fugitive faces glowering in the grey light one could easily feel that hunger was the eternal hound upon their tracks. . .

Although Gillachrist McBrady could not very clearly express his meaning in English, not at least in regard to the finer points of characterisation, the artist that was in Martin rose complementary to the deficiency originating from the obsession of the other with another tongue. They sat there amongst the crowd, two men of art whose minds moved gradually from the pathos to the humour of the situation. . . Both had sprung from the peasant in obedience to the same impulse

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which had called them away from the plough in the Ireland of their time. Either condition, that of peasantry or literature, might appear healthy enough of itself, but it was pitiful to think that it had led them to this, to become part of the dregs of the population. Why had both drifted into this condition which betokened social failure? This fable about coming here to look for copy was only a pretence—they had made copy of themselves, they were really unable to afford a night's lodging in any better place.

They parted after a drink in the public-house across the street from the doss-house. The taste of their pints was disgusting as they stood there while the old women with the rusty shawls and dirty cans crowded in around them, and there came a thick trail of speech in the lower Dublin accent across and about the shop like the trail of a slimy thing.

"Fine copy!" said Gillachrist McBrady, as he let down the last gulp of his pint.

"Aye!" said Martin, making a parody of his action.

Then they put down the measures quietly and went out. Martin moped slowly about some of the old ways and Dublin began to return gradually to his realisation. It was a rich and beautiful sensation, this quiet unveiling, as it were, of a lovely picture which for the moment had been obscured from the vision. He went into St. Stephen's Green and sat upon the very seat from which he and Kitty had thrown crumbs to the birds upon the lake. . .

"The doctor told me that the baby will come in May."

This sentence from her letter now burned itself in his mind. It was May now, and spring had reached the beauty of its fulness upon the flowers and trees. . .



It was curious to think of this coming of new life for which he only was responsible. . . It was woeful to sit here thinking, thinking. He who had once possessed kinship to beauty was now wallowing in the slough, even as Gillachrist McBrady, whose ambition had taken the poisonous turn of talking about a novel which he was going to write in Irish. He had been equipping himself for the writing of some such story, but, but. . .

As he wandered aimlessly out of the Green he came upon a way which led towards Ranelagh and along which he had often gone in the lamplit evenings with Ellen. And to think that all their talking had brought them only to this, a quiet parting and a meeting that had been missed because of the queer fate that had enmeshed him. . . He retraced his steps and turned into another street. . . Now he was meeting people who all seemed at some time or other to have been connected with the Tower Theatre. Even now there was a certain agreeable surprise in knowing that he had risen up from the plough into that glorious purlieu of the pen in Ireland. It suddenly appeared as the place from which all the adventure of his life had sprung. . . And yet, as he moved along Cuffe Street and past the house of Mrs. McQuestion, his life appeared to have been coloured by other influences more firmly embedded in his being. . . It was from this very house, and because of him, that the half-clad girl had gone to join the women of the shawls. . . He was a pretty scoundrel surely, a traitor even to Arthur Nicholson, for although not yet twenty-four hours returned to Dublin he had already slipped back a considerable distance into the way that had ruined him, and Nicholson had asked him to give up pub-crawling.

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He began to hurry in the direction of the National Library. It was here he would meet Séan O'Hanlon with whom he had gone a certain distance down a starry way. . . They shook hands warmly, while O'Hanlon spoke again of Ireland.

"There's no place like it," said the idealist in his flat, Dublin accent; "we're going to do something for Kathleen-ni-Houlihan and I want you to join us. Meet me at five. This is pay-day, and we'll have a little snack at 'The Laurel.'"

Martin began to move aimlessly about the Library looking at the new books in the case and at the authors newly arrived in the index. There was an immediate personal cause for this exploration although it was but dimly perceptible to his own mind. He was possessed of the remote idea that some day his name, too, should appear there. Now and then he turned around to observe those who came in through the turnstiles, strangers to him for the most part, new students at University College, young men and women eager for jobs and knowledge. . . Then there were the famous, old frequenters whose tastes were on histories and statistics and encyclopedias, a dismal crowd. The poets were absent; he did not see McDonagh or Pearse. He saw little knots of men conversing eagerly on the steps of the Library as he came out with O'Hanlon. He imagined them to be talking fiercely against England. The face of the idealist was lit by a quiet smile. . . Then he suddenly turned into a house in Kildare Street and emerged ten minutes later wearing a uniform such as Martin had seen upon others although he had been only a short while returned to Dublin. There seemed to be something theatrical about this military ostentation

which might be spoiled by the slightest touch of realism, as Martin had seen the effect of an Irish National Forster's Robert Emmet uniform spoiled, on the day of some great National demonstration, by a heavy man thus richly attired stumbling drunk out of a pub in Parnell Street, the froth of fresh porter in brown beads upon his dark moustache.

"I couldn't wear the blessed thing in the Library, for you see it is anathema there. A Government institution, you know, and this is not a Government uniform." A little later, over a bottle of stout and a snack in the bar of "The Laurel," O'Hanlon told Martin of this thing that had happened in their midst, the warlike preparation which had begun to emerge out of the whirl of the world war, this proposed attempt through the possible desolation of youth and bravery to pluck the mantle of sorrow from the shoulders of Kathleen-ni-Houlihan. Martin could not feel himself suddenly entering into the great enthusiasm which made Séan almost a poet as he talked on. It was just the kind of talk which Martin had so far been unable to understand. It sprang from the writings of Davis and Mitchel and Fintan Lalor, and told of the building of the nation from within. Vaguely all that philosophy of poetical patriotism included him in the poetic significance it gave the nation, but it expected him first to be a nation-builder, a fighter, while his mind was altogether so subtle and so minutely threaded by cross-currents of sympathy that he could not suddenly see himself in this state which would seem to be the very heart's desire of Séan O'Hanlon. It was O'Hanlon who had led him childlike into the ways of literature. His mind had been crude enough before the coming of that guid-

ance, but now its innermost workings were so richly contrived that, apart from all incidents of politics or government or nationality, he could view it at any point and see its humanity and its meaning. Séan O'Hanlon must have passed through this struggle, too, and triumphed even to the extent of his present enthusiasm, for all soldiering, whether for Britannia or Kathleen-ni-Houlihan, was essentially crude and in perpetual conflict with the gentle inclinations of the poetic temperament. . . They had been a long time talking between their lapses of thoughtful silence, but at last they arose and went out into the lamplit streets.

It was now about the hour when Dublin is most beautiful, when the very sounds in the street seem to acquire some of the colour of the evening and all things drop quietly in processional order into a grand monotone. Beyond the continuous boom of the hurrying trams could be heard surprising sounds breaking in upon the evening, the children singing and dancing round a barrel-organ in a distant street, the steady, adenoidal chorus of the newsboys. Passing "The Daffodils" they stood for a moment to gaze at the vase of well-known flowers drooped desolately in the window.

They saw the gesticulating *litterati* reflected upon the frosted glass. . . Each thought simultaneously of Wilde's poem of *The Harlot's House*, and the quotation broke from the lips of O'Hanlon while Martin nodded in exultation because of the coincidence of remembrance.

. . . Like wire-pulled automatons  
Slim silhouetted skeletons

. . . . .

Sometimes a horrible marionette  
Came out and smoked a cigarette  
Upon the steps like a live thing. . .

Then, in the kinship and love of poetry, they walked on with their heads held high. Each felt that it is not so easy to move a man from his inner impulse. O'Hanlon, because he had lifted his eyes beyond himself to the glory of the newer Ireland, seemed the nobler figure. Yet, Martin, because he had not merged his egotism, because he still stood in nearer relation to all that was himself, remained nearer poetry. But there was upon both at parting the full sadness of their minds' endowment. . .

Martin stood a long time at the corner of Nassau Street wondering blindly where he might spend the night. The doss-house again was pretty well all he could afford. . . Suddenly he saw a face looking at him long and strangely apart from the hurrying throng. It was Margaret Murtagh, his lover landlady. He thought she looked older than when he had last seen her, and her dust-coat, too, seemed shabby beyond recovery. She smiled, and then came over to him. Momentarily he wondered what her purpose could be. What else except to dun him for what he owed her? This was the immediate revenge of life for his attempt to find a little poetic exaltation while in the company of O'Hanlon. He knew a sudden and powerful depression, but he had already found himself in this situation.

"I'm sorry," he said, "awfully sorry, but on the evening I went to America I hadn't a second to spare and I could not possibly manage to see you. I'm sorry."

He half-expected a sharp, distrustful, reproachful

answer, but she only looked up at him with her big, tired eyes, and said:

"Oh, not at all, Mr. Duignan, don't mention it. I always knew that you'd come back to me some day, and just imagine meeting you like this! Come on up to the house and have a bottle of stout or something!"

As they went up Grafton Street and Harcourt Street she was prattling continuously although he spoke little. He was catching glimpses of her story, her shattered romance with its dingy, quiet ending. . .

As they sat facing one another later in the kitchen after she had given him a good meal they seemed to be surrounded by an atmosphere pregnant of happening. . . All the boarders were in their beds, and there was no sound about them save that of an occasional late pedestrian going up or down the South Circular Road. . . She was a fine woman still, her face still soft and strong in its frame of billowy hair. There was a look in her eyes as if she had become suddenly famished for love. Her talk was continually interspersed with such phrases—"And musha, sure I was only a weeshey girl at the time and I going to school," Through their talk the scenes of their youth were returning, and there was falling upon him crushingly a leaden sadness. . .

They remained talking far into the night here in the kitchen. At last they spoke only in snatches. . . But, gradually, her purpose grew before his mind from which all realisation had been almost blotted by her desire. She wanted him to stay with her, to live with her, or to marry her—the solicitor had failed her and she after keeping him so many years. He had gone away after owing her four or five years' board. . .

Martin could have a comfortable, easy life of it here,

and could go on with his writing in peace. It was a great chance for him happening, so luckily, too, at this very time. . . But the mere thought seemed, somehow, the end of his great ambition and the interment of his very soul—a common boarding-house bully, the very notion was appalling. At last the thoughts of both retreated into a very forest of gloom. . .

He rose hurriedly for the morning was already high and warm, and left the house with an air of decision.

## III

HE walked with the speed of a fugitive down the South Circular Road and up through the city. The sense of the increasing degradation which had befallen him was heavy about his eyes and his mind. Henceforth, what better was he than those men, policemen and Irishmen, who lived on women in New York City! It had been that way with him and Kitty, but her beauty had somehow kept him from falling down to this filthy level. His life had dwindled deplorably, but as he went up the hill by Findlater's Church and past Parnell Square into old Dublin, with its Georgian houses, he felt the full, surging beauty of this lovely city. . . . He thought of lines from poems as he hurried along, and as he went past the Roman Catholic Church at Phibsborough the keen summer wind seemed to strip his mind of all sin and shame.

Already Margaret Murtagh was no more to him than Kitty Haymer. . . . He seemed free again as the wind blowing over the fields. He marched on with a fine swing, a glow in his body and a glow in his mind. He felt freer now than on any other day during his life and he seemed to be at the beginning of a new life. The summer morning was wide and windy upon the green fields. . . . After he had walked a mile or so he lit a cigarette and stood for a moment to look across a wall at the cattle and sheep standing there so peacefully in the high, luxurious grass. . . . He fell into a trance of remembered beauty and lines from Yeats began to throng through his mind:



I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine  
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And Mid-May's eldest child  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

It was strange that this brief, half-dreamy repetition or recollection of these lines should be running through his mind now as he journeyed this road way in County Dublin. There was so little that might be considered poetical in the appearance of the men he was meeting. They looked at him in sullen distrust. Who in the world was this stranger walking along the road? Immediately Martin felt himself cowering before the power of their inquisitive stare, that power he had felt of old in Glannidan. They were exactly like those he had known in that place, and as they met him amid the brightness of the summer road he could hear them muttering to themselves: "Who's that now?" "Who's that, I wonder?" "Damn it, he's city dressed, so he is, and it's hellish curious to see him tramping!" "Maybe he had a motor car or a motor bike and it's what it broke down on him!" "But, begad, it must be tramping he is for his boots is dusty and he looks tired." "An educated young fellow, too, by the looks of him, but he must have made damn little use of it or it's not tramping he'd be now." "I suppose he hasn't as much money in his pocket

at the present time as would jingle on a tombstone." By realisation of their soliloquies or their talk the glory of his mood was becoming surmounted and the fine plan he had so unaccountably formed in Margaret Murtagh's house was becoming suddenly abridged. He was beginning to feel the power which might break him after his return to the clay. They would be like this about him always, such people inquiring into his every action, endeavouring to peer into his very soul, making every possible attempt to trace the recent course of his life and to indicate for his torture this downward curve by which it had returned to the clay. That strange retreat would be for ever before his mind all starkly in accusation, the few bright splashes of ecstasy here and there being almost obliterated by the massive and quiet gloom of this ending whose beginning had been Kitty Haymer.

Now, the occasional farmers going towards their fields were being interspersed by men of the tramp class. They, too, looked at him in distrust for, although some subtle feeling of kindred told them that the same hideous torture of life had driven him to the road, he still wore good clothes, the trappings of respectability, and they had their suspicions of him. He had not become wholly emancipated, although he had tasted some of the freshness and freedom of the road.

It was pleasant to come into a tidy village on the mearing as it were, between Meath and Dublin, and to think upon its history as he came. It was curious to remember that in other centuries men had moved about here pretty much as they were moving now. Why was it that they were so much after a pattern, these Irish villages, so stereotyped? There was

scarcely a variation. The Protestant church at one end and the Catholic chapel at the other, a few ivy-covered cottages in the centre and a few more cottages straggling away down the roads which led from it; the forge with its door shaped like a horse-shoe, leading into the dark, heavy smelly atmosphere within; the blacksmith coming over from the anvil with a red-hot shoe and burning the hoof of a horse, while the street seemed to have been suddenly filled with the stink of burning horn. A little further on was the aged, humped cobbler, looking strangely caricatured behind a bubble window, a handful of tacks in his mouth and all his philosophy of life and death simmering up in his mind and ready to overflow through tacks and all upon the entrance of any customer. Then came the dressmaker with sore, watery eyes, immensely patient at her machine, the next house being a hardware shop with the agricultural implements outside the door, further on a public-house and then another and still another public-house, for drink is a necessary aid in man's battle with the fields. The barracks with passive peelers leaning against the door. All these were here.

Martin went into what seemed the most quiet of the pubs. Although he had been unable to afford the train fare from Dublin to Ballycullen he had still a few shillings in his possession, and he was dusty and tired and still thirty miles from his native place. He threw out threepence for a pint and another penny for a bun. He sat down on the end of a porter barrel, but, for a few minutes, was too tired either to eat or drink. His mind was in a state of semi-vacancy over which easily flowed the talk of those around him. It seemed that there were a number of men going out to cut a meadow

of first crop grass and that there was a great discussion in progress as to the exact amount of drink they would require to sustain them in their labours. . . They were fine, bronzed fellows with wiry stubbles, and it seemed unbelievable that Martin had once been like them. . . Yet he had not been altogether like them, for in Glannanea he had never taken porter to drown the sorrow of his labour. . . Yet, through power of the vicissitudes through which he had passed, was he now about to drink a pint, so he suddenly grew into sympathy with them and listened. . . The Tower had taught him some of the tricks of literature or, as some of the critics he had foreshadowed would put it, the placing of his ear to a crevice in the floor. He found himself listening for the intonation of the Syngian speech, but it was notably absent. This mixture of blasphemy and dirt was certainly no literary medium. After much wrangling and grinning and spitting and lighting of their pipes they took their drinks hurriedly and left the bar.

He turned to his pint and his bun, and the bored, oily publican, sticking a stub of indelible pencil into his mouth every second or so as he proceeded with some calculation, was observing him furtively from beneath the brim of his wide, white hat. It almost seemed as if he were making a mathematical explanation for his own satisfaction of the extent of the sudden and swift degradation which had befallen Martin.

He drank the pint without much enjoyment for he grew suddenly fearful of further scrutiny and was soon slipping quietly down the unfrequented side of the village street. On the open road once more his thoughts arose to torture him. It seemed that it was

now to be a fight between his own personality and the combined personalities of those from whom he had sprung. . . Their horrible inquisitiveness would be continually compelling him to remember the life through which he had passed. It would hold continual promise of torment. It was quite impossible to think that whatever powers his mind possessed might ever dominate their minds towards respect for him, either reading or writing they would think of as a most laughable waste of time. It was difficult to fully realise his return to the clay even as it was more amazingly difficult to realise how far he had moved away from it. . .

He could hear the noise of a motor moving towards him along the road. Then it passed contemptuously in a cloud of dust. The car contained only Austin Fagan. . . . The sudden flashing-back of time and event and place did not immediately strike him as a coincidence of fiction for the Clerk of the Union went every other day to Dublin in quest of joy. . . But the small and splendid motor was somewhat of a surprise. It formed proof of the extent to which Austin had thriven in the absence of Martin. A motor-car, imagine, although even the motor bicycle had made them curse to a shocking extent. Martin's ears grew warm as he thought of the words they must be using about Austin now. If he ever heard them again in the spaces of their work in the fields. . . This, above all, seemed to affect him with a deeper sense of misgiving of the life into which he was returning, his sensibility might never be able to triumph over the surge of anger this would bring to his blood—to think of Austin Fagan and his sister Brigid.

Towards evening he went into a farmer's place for

a drink of water. The people of the house were taking their tea and invited him to join them, which he did, gladly. . . He fell into admiration of the healthy appetite of the men who came in from the fields. The women of the house looked at him in concern. It must be his pale, handsome face, he thought. . . After a rest and a chat by the fire, when the night had fallen, he went on upon his further journey to Glannidan and Glannanea.

## IV

**A**LTHOUGH the physical exhaustion of Martin was great his mind was driven down to a greater weariness as he entered the boreen which led up to his mother's house. In one moment it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should be returning; at another it appeared a mean and despicable thing and an offence against his manhood as well, this slinking home, beaten and ashamed; but had his mother not invited him to return after the departure of Jamesey Cassels from the household; had she not pressed him to return just quite recently? But, doubtless, his mother had striven to magnify him in their eyes and they expected great things of him, these ignorant, anxious people of the boreens. It was not usual to return, from America, above all places, without the signs of success upon one. Those who had never won success never thought of returning, but he was an exception.

This continual thought that he was an exception sufficiently denoted the full strength to which his egotism had arisen and was earnest sufficient of the remarkable conflict which was about to be inaugurated. There were the fields about him, their meanings dimly defined in the half-light, and from out them seemed to come a continual crush of little memories, a flow of small tortures mingled curiously with remembrance of glad moments he had spent with Lucy Flynn. . . The stars were bright in the young summer sky, and it seemed a very glad thing indeed to be coming down the homeward curve of the clay now. A kind of wild happiness

seemed to claim him as he came up to his mother's door. What was he doing after all, only coming home in obedience to her call. He had delayed about it, of course, but now at last it had come, this return in filial obedience. Yet was there some kind of flutter in his heart, a slight stir of fearful anticipation. He had little money in his pocket, and only poor clothes, and he had walked from Dublin. His heels had vanished even further than their state of disappearance in New York. He was aware that he was not returning as his mother had seen him in her dreams and endeavoured to picture him in her talk by the egg carts at the market of Glannidan. . . He who had gone away from the clay because that lowly condition was insufficient for him was now returning, not altogether fit for the condition from which he had so ambitiously removed himself. He went up to the door and knocked, just as a stranger might have done, instead of walking in with the old familiarity. A double reason for this seemed to suddenly shape itself in his mind. It was part of the good bearing of decency he had learned abroad, and yet in this moment it suggested a subtle aspect of the separation from his mother. He noticed as she stood in the open doorway that she looked out at him even more wistfully than had been her custom, and gathered the little black shawl depending from her shoulders across her breast with a more desolate gesture.

"Who's that?"

"It's me, mother."

"Who are you? Why, I declare it's Martin! And are you back from America? What's up?"

He had expected a warmer welcome, and now some of the inevitable constraint he had dreaded all the way from



Dublin was upon him. He shuffled into the kitchen, and immediately his attitude was one of defeat. Life had chastened him to a most amazing extent, and as soon as he entered he fell beneath the influence of the well-known scene. . . But now he felt the presence of the new life whose power had already begun to overshadow his own. There was his sister Brigid sitting by the fire and dandling a child upon her knee. Here was the little life whose coming had shrouded him in gloom and had driven him with the impulse of a withering fire through his sin. . . Yet, how innocent did it look here now dancing upon its mother's knee and clutching with its little fat hands the soft part of her face. And his sister Brigid was so completely unmindful of him as he came into the kitchen. All her thought and life seemed to be for this child of her shame, the creature who had so curiously twisted the fortunes of this house. She had eyes for no other thing. He was hurt by her indifference. She was his sister, and he felt she should have some subtle understanding of the pain through which he had passed. . . His mother was behaving differently. She was making a cup of tea for him and striving to maintain a good show of humour, although, in the very anxiety of her effort her real condition was becoming more pitifully apparent to Martin. Continually she was accompanying her preparations by questions as to his way of life since he had left home. The marks of success were not upon him, consequently the effort of her words was in no way inspiring. Rather did they fall, in their quiet commonsense phrasing, upon the weak spots of his mind to torture him still further. They smote him with a sense of his failure.

"Musba, d'ye read as much books as ever, Martin?"

"Man alive, Martin, it's you that had the great times when you were off play-acting in Dublin. . . Bad cess to it, but they often made me laugh when they'd tell me about the figarios that you'd have yourself got up in. Well, well, whoever would think that you would have took such a whim for circus people, for the sorra one of my family ever had anything to do with circuses."

"Musha, and did you not get married the time you used to be going about Dublin so much with the actressy-looking lassie? Why, anybody that used to be in Dublin that time used never be tired telling me of the fine figure both of yous used to cut and yous going about the street!"

"And d'ye know what it is, Martin? You're not swanky at all and all the grand life you're after going through and all to that. Just as plain as you were the day you left this floor, with no grand clothes on you or anything at all. I suppose, don't you know, that you're after getting a little sense?"

Thus did she run on as with aching, humbled body he sat there on the chair, the hot soles of his boots burning his feet. . . When she had ceased, only to go on sighing to herself, the burden of the torment was taken up by the wailing of the child mingled with Brigid's attempts to comfort it:

"Hushaby, Austineen; Hushaby, Austineen!"

He knew that the people of a betrayed girl always took a peculiar delight in calling the child, if it were a boy, by the name of the girl's betrayer. Hence the Austineen which seemed to connote a continuous belittlement of Austin Fagan. . . Little wonder indeed that Jamesey Cassels, fool and all as he was, had

gone back to Mucklin and then into the army and later out to France, as his mother presently told him.

His bed of chaff seemed very soft as he laid him down. But his weariness did not win him sleep. . . Continually there came thronging regrets as to what he had done with his life, and there passed before him in continual procession the figures which had determined the character of his life, his father, Arthur Duignan; his mother, his sister, Brigid; Austin Fagan, Father Clarke, Peter O'Brien, Mr. Cullen, Mrs. McQuestion, Leonard Thompson, and the Tower people; Séan O'Hanlon, Ignatius Nolan, Arthur Nicholson, but foremost always and more clearly, Lucy Flynn, the girl in Mrs. McQuestion's, Margaret Murtagh, Ellen O'Connor, and Kitty Haymer. . . At the other end of the house he could hear the crying of Brigid's child, the mother comforting it, and then his mother talking to her again as if they were discussing between them the best method of rearing children. Maybe they were comparing his babyhood with that of Austineen. . .

A great deal of the life of the house had hitherto centred around his existence, or at least it had appeared so to him, but now this other life had begun to oust him. The women had concentrated their attention upon it and so his vanity had been subjected to an attack which was not at all to his liking. He had fallen into the habit of being considered somebody, even if only by himself, and although this seemed a mean little thing to bother about it was something definite which for the moment replaced all speculations concerning the life through which he had passed. . . At last he fell into a heavy slumber. . .

In the morning he could hear his mother putting

down the fire which would prepare the breakfast. Then about these poor sounds he began to feel the great silence of the fields. For more than a year his ears had been filled with the immense sounds of cities and now this tremendous lull. . . This was surely the place where a man's sadness might thrive, where a man might be crushed by himself down to the nethermost circle of his hell. . . Now he could hear voices in the yard just beneath his window. It was his mother talking to a neighbour who had called for the loan of something.

"I was thinking it was him we seen passing. He had his head down, and you wouldn't know him from Adam."

"Aye, he's home, begad."

"Bedambut!"

"Arrah, musha, Mike, 'tis a poor heart that never rejoices, and sure he's home from America for a bit of sport. And mightn't he as well. Sure, youth is the proper season for sport and the like."

"Damn its soul, didn't he grow into the fine big slob of a lad? But a bit heavy on his feet, wouldn't you think, and remindful of the Gauger Conroy?"

Here was a marvellous bit of satirical criticism, and Martin felt it as he lay there his mind burning him. The Gauger Conroy was an old drunkard of Glannidan. He was a man, huge, blasphemous, almost obscene in his bigness. He had had a great job in his time, as great jobs were understood in Glannidan. Away in a big distillery, drinking all day and getting well paid for it. Now wasn't that a great job for any man? Then he had come home, a foul-mouthed drunkard, and married a young wife. He was always drunk, and his habit became so widely known and the

fact that sobriety was a condition impossible to him, that "as drunk as the gauger" was now a term illustrative of complete intoxication.

Here, surely, thought Martin, was an almost uncannily clever attempt to place him. It sent the fire surging through his veins. . . Yet he did not feel any immediate desire to condemn the people among whom he had fallen. It seemed now that his sole desire was to lose himself in the immense quietness which flowed over the place. To-day he would wander about all the old scenes as he had previously wandered about Dublin and New York, viewing them contemplatively, in their literary aspects. But his mind was burning to feel the realisation of one spot—the widow Kelly's. He began to think of all the pubs he had seen across the world, and he was desirous of here consolidating his experience. He remembered it now, but very faintly, as some place he had known in a bygone time. He thought of it as a place where men had gone with their sorrows. . .

Therefore as soon as his breakfast was over he prepared to leave the house. Brigid had not yet made her appearance out of bed, but just as he was leaving the house his mother came to the door and gave him a look which was a mixture of pity and anxiety.

"I'm sorry," she said, "that I have nothing in the house to offer you a treat, and sure a grand, fine-looking fellow like you was used to being treated in style and you going about with the plays. Here!"

She handed him half-a-crown, but the situation had been so crudely created that it hurt him, yet he took the money, for, immediately, he felt that it would be sufficient to blot out of his consciousness the hurt

which that action had created. Down the road he went now with that look which he had always associated with those who went the roads in the evenings or often indeed at mid-day, running for the bare life as it were from some sudden torture that had sprung up in the fields. Yet the curious conceit he had acquired was sustaining him. He was going in search of copy now, an author, I thank you, in the making, although still some distance from arrival. It would be interesting to watch them, he thought, as they sat drinking there. They might grow into a common sympathy with the drowning of their sorrow. Yet, as in every definite intention of his life, was he destined to be frustrated in this, for here was Lucy Flynn coming towards him down the road. She was swinging a can rather gaily in her hand and singing as she came. She had a curious smile playing around her lips as she stopped before him.

"Martin!" she said, simply.

His voice seemed very uncertain as he replied. Yet here surely was Lucy Flynn, of whom he had often thought in distant places and under strange circumstances. Now she stood before him. As she laid down the can upon the road and folded her arms he took notice of their strength. She had not those charms of the body which had brought into his life the curse of Kitty. . . . There was red down upon the arms of Lucy, and Kitty's skin had been so white and smooth. She did not know, of course, how well his mother had guessed at least one byeway of his degradation. But then, immediately, it appeared that Lucy had intuitively seen him further buried in his shame. There were ugly little wrinkles about her eyes, and it was easy to see that she was no longer young. No doubt he had con-

tributed to the ravages of the years in her case; he had marched hand in hand with Father Time. . . For a moment it was queer to think that he had not written her one single letter. . .

"I was just going up to your mother with a sup of buttermilk. Isn't it a pity of the world the way the second cow is after dying on her, the poor thing? We only heard that you were home about twenty minutes ago."

Here was a curious opportunity for mixture of sensations. The second cow had died on them, and in the natural course of events had he remained here and fallen into the ways of those around him he should have gone into the widow Kelly's to exhibit his gloom. Now surely was he only about to enjoy the arrears of his gloom. . . And here was Lucy to tell him by her presence of all she might still be to him, of all she might be to him at the present moment even though things had happened differently and the second cow had died. Yet here was he making for the widow Kelly's now, while because of him and all he had done the summer was beginning to fade from her cheek.

He went on the road towards Glannidan and she continued her way towards his mother's house. No doubt she was going there now to condole and to question in a friendly way and to show great interest in his home coming.

The village of Glannidan when he entered it seemed not less impossible than it had ever been. It now appeared a great while since he had been here. When he went into the widow Kelly's the proprietress was moving hugely behind the counter, a great bulk of pride and flesh. Out of this little hole of a public-

house she had made sufficient to farm and fortune all her sons and daughters thereby proving to the fullest the truth of the old saying that where there was a yard of counter well managed it was better than a farm of land. She had not known Martin very well, but she had seen his father, "Arthur Duignan, the common idiot," spend his life and the most of his farm here by this counter. Indeed it was she who had seen and heard him, a big, slobbering man, always quoting out of books. She detested books, because before all things she was a realist and life was the volume that she read. She had prospered exceedingly, and no one, not even the priest himself, had ever been able to say a word to her. She had made the farms and the money for her sons and daughters out of the money for gloom and the farms that had been drunk here.



## V

MARTIN paid for his drink with the half-crown his mother had given him. The widow Kelly was not the usual oily, obsequious type of publican. On the contrary she made a parade of her boorishness, scarcely ever speaking to a customer, but always moving thus ponderously and sullenly behind the counter.

If he had foolishly imagined any sudden comfort from the presence of this woman he was immediately mistaken. She looked at him with a contempt born of a feeling of superiority and spotlessness which had arisen out of the stories she had heard of him. A play-actor that was what he was, a grand-looking thing indeed for any mother's son to be, a fellow that painted himself up and made himself a clown for people to laugh at. This while his mother and sister, God help them, through his fault and no one's else, were a laughing-stock in the country. And his mother, too, in the face of all that to go let on many a time to Glennon, the egg-man, that her son, Martin, had a great job away in America. Indeed she felt a queer disgust against her customer. He had begun by ordering a stylish and literary drink—gin and brandy. However, it was not until he had ordered a second one that she was moved to speak her mind:

"Gin and brandy, begad, and sure I remember well how your poor father, God be good to him, used to be satisfied with a pint of porter. Musha, it's not everyone can afford to take a stylish drink like that."

Momentarily he felt a little vexed with himself for

being in this place at all. Yet he felt some of his acquired personality stir up to assist him as he stood here talking to this vulgar woman, something which came out of his faculty for literary perception, and which in the end might come to his salvation enabling him to see things as they really were. Yet it was the very littleness of this place which gave it such amazing power, and the stillness upon the street which crushed his life into a narrow point of vast personal importance. Now and again this great stillness was broken by the voice of someone speaking outside, and soon men were rushing in from their labour, their nailed boots hammering hard upon the cement floor. They looked dirty in their mid-week beards and there was a noisome smell of sweat from them. In their midst Martin appeared genteel by comparison. His clothes might look shabby among the grand surroundings of cities, but here he was as one strangely elevated, and this was the immediate fact that made them hate him even as he stood there. Soon his presence began to be felt, that is, to be detested to an even greater degree. Here were they only rushing in from their work to get a pint for God's sake, while he could sit here and take it at his leisure. This was an immense consideration seeing that these men measured the excitement of their lives by bouts of drinking and by little snatches of idleness like the present. And there was he not even asking them to have a drink either, and this was something that had always been done by men who had returned from America. The fact that he had not got it for himself did not immediately appear to them, but merely the outward fact that he had it and was too bloody mean to share it with them. . .

Yet the half-crown his mother had given him was bringing Martin rapidly towards a state of exaltation. He was beginning to feel the gladness of the bottle; soon he was seeing himself as the *litterateur*, the author arrived. Here moving intimately around him, were the people whose little lives and little tragedies would make him famous. . . The people of his book were very near him surely, but he was waiting for some incident that would concentrate them. He waited eagerly until it came. . . He saw Mrs. Kelly climb up into the window, where the cobwebbed bottles hid the lower portion of the view, and look out upon the street, and he saw the crowd in the shop rush to the street door to look out. There was a smirk of a grin upon the faces of all of them as they returned from their gazing, and as she came down, flopping awkwardly from the window, to supply them.

"Fill us another pint, ma'am, if you please!"

"They're in town again."

"Begad, they are."

Then those who through every effort of knavery had effected their escape would feel the extent of their escape. The "grippers" were in Glannidan! The "grippers" were in Glannidan! The very first intimation of this legal visitation was sufficient to bring them joy. But to know with whom they had come to stay was sufficient to extend their satisfaction.

"Be the holy!" or "Be Jaises!" or "Begad!" they would ejaculate continuously in the naked gladness of their malevolence. These descendants of gallant and glorious Irishmen who, in old times, had been the sworn enemies of law and order had already regarded themselves in sympathy as one man upon the

side of the grippers and the peelers against the man who had fallen although he had fallen only because he had failed to equal or to excel them in "the trickery of business" as they politely called it. Most of them owed money, and so they were glad to see the menace he represented smashed before their eyes. They would begin to drink in jubilation as they realised that the gripping process was being proceeded with a little way down the street. Begad and Bechrist, it was great! It was bloody well right to run him out of Glannidan! The curse of hell on him, the common robber.

The unfortunate man was in the very middle of his hell in the very middle of Glannidan. The eyes of all his neighbours were enjoying the scene which had been created. The "grippers" were throwing out his few poor sticks of furniture on the road, the few familiar utensils which for so many years had cooked the food that kept himself and his wife and children alive, even the nice big photograph of himself and the wife that they had got taken while on their honeymoon in Dublin; the grand second-hand piano which he had bought in the hey-day of his business and which had served to give a sense of comfort and decency to their lives—all these intimate, almost living things, were given the road amid the cries of the children which mingled continuously with the laughter of the others a little way up the street. A drunken policeman stood on guard at the door of the shop. He owed the man who was being "gripped" a considerable sum and had made up his mind to steal something before he went off duty at the door. . .

Here all starkly presented was the first clear glimpse

that Martin had got of Glannidan in its literary aspect. Now Mrs. Kelly left the bar and went into the outer shop where Austin Fagan and Brian Doyle had come together for a drink. Mrs. Kelly always hung upon their words as the finest products of great wisdom. They were a couple of young men who had triumphed according to the idea of triumph which obtained in Glannidan, two "successes" they were. By a curious chance they began to talk about America. Neither of them had ever been there and the little they had read did not warrant them posing as authorities on America. Why had the widow Kelly not spoken of America to him? He knew, and it was through Austin Fagan indirectly, that he had seen and now knew so much about America. . . . The half-crown was drunk so he staggered out from the bar and went home.

## VI

**H**E began to take control of affairs again on the little farm in Glannanea, but only in a half-hearted sort of way, and only in so far as it was of immediate benefit to him. There was a fair about to be held in Glannidan so he proposed the sale of a few calves from off the field that adjoined that of Lucy Flynn's father. This was the last field in the little holding, and seemed to urge, by its very luxuriance, the union for their mutual benefit of both families. As he looked over the little farm he saw with a feeling of rising sadness how the stock and the tillage had dwindled. Jamesey Cassels had let the land go to hell. Of course the poor fellow could scarcely be blamed for he had brought good money into the place, but where had it gone? Father Clarke knew all about that, and possibly also his first lieutenant, Peter O'Brien, the Marquis of Clonlough. He had not encountered Father Clarke since he came home, but he had seen him pass down the dusty streets of Glannidan as he stood in the widow Kelly's. The whole business of Martin and his mother and Brigid and Austin Fagan and Jamesey Cassels was well hidden in his mind. Many such arrangements were well hidden in his mind. Martin sometimes imagined him to be seeking some distraction from them as he went around Glannidan reading his holy book. . .

And there were things buried in the mind of Martin that he could not forget. There was Kitty Haymer, for instance. . . So he wanted to be going to the widow Kelly's continually, and it was not a place where one

could go without plenty of money. So far he had not been able to think of returning to work in the old way. The clothes he wore were of a finer texture than those Lowry Pigeon, the tailor, had been used to make for him. This queer hesitancy which held him suspended above endeavour was further symbolised in his memories of Kitty, who was set, as in a burning frame, within his memory. She was at home in England now, and her time had already come and he had not gone to her in her need.

He had come out into the mearing field to have a look at the calves he was going to sell at the fair of Glannidan, and now he saw Lucy Flynn coming towards him from the direction of her father's field where she had been second-moulding potatoes. Considering her occupation she was dressed neatly enough and her white apron was in artistic contrast to the green fields. Yet did she look coarse and strong, and as she showed her big white teeth in a smile there was something that pained him in the thought of Kitty which she brought to his mind. As his eyes fell to the earth with the depression of his thought he caught sight of her great brogues, and he remembered all the daintiness of Kitty. . .

Immediately was she talking of the crops and the land, deploring the disaster that his brother-in-law, Jamesey Cassels, the dirty idiot, had brought upon the nice, tidy fields. Her talk was almost comforting in the commonsense it exhibited. In a few moments it drew him back from the dark period of his life and he was at home again in the quiet evenings before the little tragedy in his own home had driven him into the

strange byeways of life through which he had passed. Around them stretched all the fields both knew and all the homesteads of the boreens. It was upon such scenes that his eyes had dwelt in peace before his mind had finally turned into the great ways of thought and upon them fell now an immense peace as they viewed the olden, quiet place and listened to the happy, quiet sounds.

As he turned to look at her where they sat side by side he saw that she was gazing wistfully away over the fields as if in quest of some little portion of the happiness that had been denied her. He saw that she had grown a little older, at least she was not as young as the Kitty he constantly remembered. The clay and strong air and sunshine of the fields had left their mark upon her surely. Suddenly she spoke:

"I'm sorry for you, Martin; sorry that you have not made better use of your time. Sorry that you do be giving them the chance to talk about you the way they do."

Her words fell upon his mind with an even throbbing insistence and there sprang into his consciousness a sudden feeling of immense shame. He felt very well that she was speaking out of the great regard for him which had survived his early unfaithfulness.

"They're talking of you, Martin; they're talking of you, night, noon and morning. They're saying awful things about you. Nothing is too bad for them to say and it hurts me. My God, it hurts me! And it's putting between us, too. You know my father wasn't a lover of yours at any time, and you might say he's not a lover of yours now in any case!"

In these moments suddenly was being reborn his early love for Lucy, and now were sweeping over



him also the withering blasts of his punishment. Yet was the clay continually drawing them nearer. They were kissing now, great silent, blind kisses, the tears filling up their eyes. She was in his arms now, and all the appearance of strength and coarseness had gone from her. She was to him now even as Kitty had been. Long ago she had struggled out of his arms as he tried to kiss her, but now there was no struggle, not even the smallest attempt at refusal. Even until the present moment had she been puzzled to know what it was that had driven him away from her. Maybe it was that he had not seen. . . So there was upon her now a very tremendous ecstasy of revelation. Through the disturbing talk of the neighbours he might slip further and further away from her. . . But he would know now, and he would surely triumph over the life around him for her sake.

As they remained talking there a fuller depression settled down upon them. The point of all her words seemed curiously concentrated upon the thing that was himself and his talks with Kitty had been mostly of art and love and beauty. Now he was being forced to talk of things so near the clay. . . He was more distant from his curve of glory than he had ever been before. She had set her eye upon him for a husband and there seemed to be no denying her desire. Momentarily he remembered Barney Shaw's play of *Man and Superman*, which he had seen in Dublin. She must have caused Masses to be said for his safe return and made Novenas for the success of her intentions. And what a Godsend it must have been to her when he came rambling home. She was just beginning to show her age, and soon people would be saying that she had not

been able to keep her man. He might not be much of a man, for already her curious pride in him was fading further. But the blame would be put on her. Why hadn't she kept him? Now she must keep him to herself. She must hold and encourage him, even unto the ignominy of this surrender. . . Yet even now was she curiously ashamed. . . To think of all the years she had so modestly waited; waited, too, with such an amount of noble, although neglected affection, only to be betrayed at last by her love into this moment of madness. . . And he, too, was ashamed. . . Frequently even in his uttermost degradation, he had thought of her in a pure, tender way, and, strange as it might seem, even towards more complete perfection of regard since his return to the quiet life of the boreens. Now he had desecrated even the possible holiness of this thought. . . Suddenly they found themselves moving hurriedly away from one another. He ran down thorny byways on his way to Glannidan for a few drinks before closing time.

## VII

**E**VEN in spite of the frequent joy of such meetings he knew little peace. The widow Kelly's seemed to call him with a louder and more clear call. Always, in the evenings, between the conspiracy of his own mind with the silence of the fields he could hear the lapping of low, mournful sounds about his soul. He wore a forlorn look always like that of a spoiled priest although he was merely a spoiled pagan.

Often he came into the widow Kelly's at that quiet hour of the evening before the usual drunkards had assembled for their nightly carouse. He would stand there by the counter behind his drink listening to the small noises which at long intervals disturbed the street. In such deserted places one's ears attain to perfect acquaintanceship with the smallest sound so, although the cobwebbed bottles in the window hid his view, he recognised all the people who passed in the varying noises of their footsteps. . . These seemed to carry to his imagination full realisation of what the passers by had on their tongues and in the abysmal depths of their mean minds. Hard words of him, no doubt, always and always.

"He's drunk this evening again!" "Arrah, musha, sure he was blind, stinking drunk all day!" "Begad he's a rare one for the drop!" "He won't be long drinking out the little place entirely on the mother and sister." "Oh, the son of Arthur Duignan, don't you know, and what else could he be?"

And so as he stood there by the widow Kelly's little

counter he always knew full well the things that were being said of him. That they were in the main true seemed to be the strangest thing about them, for he was still a young handsome man showing all the marks of that individuality which had lifted him, even for a short while, beyond the clay. But this was the inevitable punishment for endeavouring to place himself apart from the peasant and was, on the part of the others, the method of attack always found most effective in dealing with such cases. And the feeling of antagonism thus brought to life had grown and grown until now it was a big thing threatening the whole fabric of his existence. Foolishly he had tried to flout it, doing by way of defiance the very things for which he had fiercely incurred their dislike. Yet even because of this had he given them ever increasing opportunities of besmirching him. And now was he beginning to feel that the wagging tongues had in a way defeated him. He had grown fond of drink. This dirty pub in Glannidan had become the scene of his recreation, the place of respite from the onslaughts of the hatred opposed to him, yet in this place was he continually betraying himself.

It was the most important place of degradation in Glannidan, but behind its bold and imposing front was another house which but thinly hid the gloom of death. This house was inhabited by the sad ghosts of the men who had here drunk themselves to death. There were many nights when it seemed that the two houses became merged in one another. Among the frequenters of the bar one could almost fancy the dead still moving. And when the drunken laughter rang out clear and disgusting one could almost detect

other laughter behind it which seemed always of a sudden to give it another echo and another sound. This was the laughter of the lost and dead men.

Away from those who came here for absolutely no other purpose but drink was another crowd of evening visitors who stood apart in the better portion of the pub. It was made up, for the most part, of Austin Fagan, Brian Doyle, his inseparable counterpart, a district councillor or two, the architect to the District Council, the schoolmaster. Martin was always forced to hear them begin their usual evening chat—the talk of Glannidan, that mean and hurtful gossip which to them appeared eternally interesting. Listening to the bitter things they said of one another one might be inclined to think that they were segregated as enemies from the community and banded together in the firm friendship of one another. However, this illusion was quickly dispelled when any of them dropped away from the group and went out of the shop. It was then that the moment became propitious for a new object of attack. The character of the person just gone from their company was laid pitilessly bare, and no matter in what high air of calumny the others happened to be soaring they at once alighted to this new feast like flies upon a festering sore. It was a good illustration of their liking for one another, and showed upon what manner of foundation their friendship was laid. They were merely the head pismires of Glannidan who were always full of the desire to sting one another even while continuously and collectively desirous of stinging someone else.

As Martin listened to them his mind was always filled with anger and disgust. But why did he come here

to this place at all; why was he allowing himself to be dragged further and further into the slough of Glannidan? But he might as well have asked himself why did Gillachrist McBrady, who was writing a great novel in Irish, stop in a doss-house on the south side of Dublin? All the clear issue that ever came of his torturing questioning was the fact that he always emerged at ten sodden, oblivious, drunk, blind to the ugliness of Glannidan as to the beauty of the world, letting talk out of his mouth which was in keeping with the codes of the village.

Lucy had become angry with him for his continual surrender to the villainy of the village, particularly seeing that she had surrendered herself to him. But there were times, during the long day in the fields, when she began to fear the very splendour of her intentions and to grow despondent. But it would be grand to snatch him, still clean to her seeming, even although the net had begun to settle around him.

One Sunday she met him on the walk that led around by Murray Hall, which was the promenade of Glannidan. It was on Sunday that all about this place a perfect orgy of scandal reigned high over all thought of God. . . . But as they sat at the foot of a tree looking towards where the afternoon sunlight made golden the windows of Murray Hall they were drawn at length to talk of the ways of Glannidan. Lucy hung her head after the way of one who has herself been hurt when she repeated the hard words that had been said of him one night in the widow Kelly's. But never had any even imagined words against himself brought him such a feeling of punishment as those which now fell from her lips. They debased him before his own eyes and he grew

sorry for his soul. He felt that some of the great pride of his manhood must have fallen away from him when he gave people the continual opportunity to speak of him thus. Their talk and the feeling that overhung it seemed to invade his very heart. . . Long after she had slipped away, for fear of her father being told of their walk together round the Hall, he remained there in gloomy reverie. He had wandered away down the avenue which led from Murray Hall, and again he was in the country of the boreens and very near to the churchyard of Kilkenna. He leaned across the wall and remained there gazing out for hours over the ridges of quiet graves in what he liked to call "the meadow of the dead." This little graveyard had always been a subtle aid to memory. Long ago it had helped him to recollect a line from literature, and now it caused to spring into his mind queer thoughts of many things, the tragedy of continual, aching separation, because it seemed he must have always two separations in his life and from two women at one time. Now he was far away from either Kitty Haymer or Ellen O'Connor, and often in the vacant spaces of America there had appeared such a great distance between him and his mother and Lucy Flynn. He was coming to remember, too, the burials, not of dead kinsmen, but of the burials that had taken place within himself, of vanished pieties and dead ambitions. . .

And now as he stood here in meditation he thought that at last he had seen the meaning of life very vague and vapoury within this sanctuary of peaceful bones. He had been a long time straining his eyes and his mind as it were to pierce this vision, but the lords of life and death had resolutely shut him out from the wisdom of

such a glimpse. . . As he had looked towards death for enlightenment upon the meaning of life, so did he now, as he went down the road, look towards life for some clear knowledge of death. . . A drift of little girls were coming down the road in their clean Sunday pinafores. Their simple frocks were white and pretty and their faces shone with innocence in the sun. They laughed up into his face as they went by. He had a sudden thought of them flowering into womanhood. He fancied some man, might it not be himself, coming to love one of these children grown. . . "Musha, sure, a man can marry at any time but a poor girl, God help us"—Lucy had said more than once since his return.

But beyond such a momentary flash of deeper speculation the thought of Lucy would be for ever filling his mind. The awakening of her passion and his glimpse of her tremendous regard for him had somehow snatched his heart from desolation. These were the feelings which would mark his approach to her, a generous breath of sympathy with the small compass of her mind, a fine tenderness melting and blinding him. But when they were together it was the springing of the same old darkness into his mind. He was seeing Kitty as a shadowy figure rising up between them as of old he had seen Lucy when Kitty had been with him. Yet had the great love of Lucy begun to unite them closely and they were together every evening of their lives. . .

Even still the aspect of homecoming had not been put away from him. Every evening when he left Lucy he went into Glannidan as seemed quite natural, because every Yankee that ever lived had always done it. A certain amount of his original gift of observation



had been blotted out by his dreaming, and he was unable to see that in selling some of his sheep and calves on returning to the management of his father's farm he merely showed that he had returned to drink it, even as his father had done his best to drink it in the years gone by.

Therefore a most remarkable thing was happening. Glannidan was rapidly coming into some triumph over him and compelling him to conform to its own ideas of greatness. For generations it had been an unalterable convention that a man home from America should march proudly into the pub and stand a drink to every spitting idler who might be there. From failing to realise this on the first day he had come to the widow Kelly's he had now come to have a certain cowering in his heart compelling him to feel that he must do it, even while he half felt that they were laughing at him all the time.

The widow Kelly could only barely hide her huge disgust of him.

"The mouth," she used to say, "but sure he's his father's son."

Then there was the walk home to the boreens every evening with a crowd sometimes shouting and singing, every man of them in sane interludes, especially those who had claims to be considered "Yanks" themselves, having spent some time in America, finding out the places he had been, the streets, in fact sometimes the very houses. In describing a scene or an incident when he would quite casually mention the name of a street they would break in on his talk.

"Ah, sure that's a street where there's a lot of 'bad' houses," they would say in the most casual manner

possible, and then as soon as he parted company with them would stop to wonder to one another about the queer places that Martin Duignan knew in America.

The hours of the day he was forced to spend in the house were a particular torture. There was a curious feeling of restraint or reserve between him and his mother which lashed both of them into the very froths of torment. Often they would not speak for days and a wide flame of bitterness would be burning between them. Her face would grow gradually whiter beneath the strain of it and not a word would they speak to one another. She knew and felt her responsibility for his present condition. Her ambitious notions for Brigid had resulted merely in the fact that he had been replaced by this other life which crawled and shouted on the floor before his eyes.

More often than seemed absolutely necessary in the interests of cleanliness the little naked body would be stripped for his enjoyment as it were. The subtle, quiet enmity which had again sprung into being between Brigid and himself had now relapsed into silence. But it was this continual parading of the child that got on his nerves and drove him from the house in the evenings. And where he always went was to Lucy Flynn. This was another cause of his mother's grief, for right well did she know where he was always going. It annoyed her more than anything else to see him slipping back from the grand ways of life thus far. And then at those times when he spoke to his mother, always something would be let fall in the conversation, always something would suddenly attack his mind twisting it into a greater fury than heretofore. She had love for him surely, and as her son he flashed back some of that love; but

it was beyond her to understand the moulding of his mind. To her he appeared as a good-for-nothing and no more. All that he had passed through was not to her way of thinking an adventure of the soul but merely so much blackguardism. A book she had never read in her life, so it was quite impossible for her to see the enormous importance with which Martin looked upon books.

"Why you'd think I was a tramp the way I'm looked down upon in this house!" he said angrily, one morning.


"And what else are you, I'd like to know? You have no job and no clothes, and only whatever money in your pocket belongs by right to me and your sister and the little child. Musha, sure, 'tis only making a show of us before the people of Glannidan you are. Sure if you're so mad and all that on books and writing, sure can't you go in properly for writing for the *Ballycullen Gazette* like Brian Doyle. Indeed you might say that he's a success as a writer."

This seemed the very unkindest cut, this putting of him on the same level with one for whose abilities and character he had the most complete contempt. Brian Doyle might be considered a success, as success was understood in Glannidan, but his idea of success was a lamp of the intellect that shone out over the world. It was a portion of the bright dream that had come into his mind for love of Ellen. For Ellen! The very thought appeared as a blasphemy and a betrayal. Poor Ellen O'Connor! What had he done for her since they had drifted apart—nothing, less than nothing. He had degraded her memory in ten thousand ways. He had betrayed her. Maybe she was searching for him in America, battling with poverty and mean ways in the endless hope of love and all for sake of him who

was so supremely unworthy, a coward who after every effort to ruin his life had crept home here to bring more sorrow to the heart of his mother.

Through such little conflicts with the harshness of life, the crude world around him, there came very gradually into his mind the first realities of his great ambition. But they came in their full immensity one evening as he sat, his elbows on his knees and a pint in his hand, in the widow Kelly's. Around him were the louts of the parish, and he was entering into their gibes and their talk. Here were men with neither minds nor thought beyond the comfort of the pints in their hands—their Unholy Grail whose quest was the grey adventure of their lives.

In "The Daffodils" it had been different; even in America the gold that Arthur Nicholson had seen in him had been the means of plucking him from the furnace. But here he had allowed himself to be reduced to the level of those around him. Not many signs of success about him surely. And always, as he sat here, he could hear the sound of men of success outside in the other apartment of the shop. Whenever a loud guffaw rang in as far as where he sat he would feel that it was at him they were laughing. The whole attitude of Glannidan towards him was a gigantic sneer. And always he saw Austin Fagan as the head and front of that sneer. Why was it that he had not wreaked just vengeance upon that cur? It must be that he had accepted his fate as part of the punishment he so richly deserved for his treatment of Kitty. He had taken it in a mood of Christian acceptance, he who had done his best to make himself a pagan and yet it had only brought him to this. . .



To pluck success out of the depths to which he had descended would be the best revenge upon the forces which had conspired so resolutely to destroy his life. Suddenly this seemed to be the moment for which all his life had waited. All his years had moved blindly as it were to this ecstasy, but now it leaped and surged brightly about him. It was an immense idea surely, and it had been forced upon his commonsense by the life he must express in terms of literature. To make use of the people he best knew for this purpose, all those who had crushed him towards his punishment showing always so darkly contrasted with those who in odd moments had lit his life. . . He suddenly remembered, with a more insistent clearness, how everyone of them bought the *Ballycullen Gazette* to gloat over any piece of unfortunate connection with the law reported, even most illiterately, by Brian Doyle. It now appeared predestined that it was Martin Duignan and not Brian Doyle who was to give them a great read some day. . .

It was strange that the dream which had been evoked by Ellen in places of light and beauty should move towards realisation through the dirty darkness of the lowest aspect of Glannidan. The character of his resolve, too, was not entirely unrelated to the malignity and spitefulness of those who sprang from the clay. His dream had only been a dream after all. In itself it may have been noble, but it had raised up no nobility in him. Now it appeared to him that all achievement is essentially of the clay and that he was seeing his way, after such a long spell of blindness, to begin his life's work at the point from which all his personality should have begun to shape itself from the very first.

## VIII

SO all through the long evenings of the winter he laboured, and far into the night, when it lay very thick upon Glannidan and the boreens around Glananea, and upon the bog stretching far away to Ballycullen. Here in the room where his dead father had brought all the books from the quays in Dublin, and heedless of the crying of Brigid's child, he would remain working and laughing queerly to himself as he worked. Sometimes there would spring up before him odd little sketches which he could not possibly embody in his malignant story. These he made into short stories which he sent to the papers and magazines. After a little delay some of these came to be published, and with the first cheques he had bought good clothes which put him on a decent footing in Glannidan. He did not attempt to imitate the foppishness of Austin Fagan and Brian Doyle, yet was this effort of his suddenly putting him on a level with them. This the people of Glannidan would not have minded in the least, but a curious side of him remained which they could not understand. He was a queer character anyway. Here now stories by him were being printed in papers a thousand times more important than the *Garradrimna Guardian* or even the *Ballycullen Gazette*, yet it was in the public bar of the widow Kelly's that he still chose to take his pleasure. When Austin Fagan or Brian Doyle drank it was in secret in some of the remote and hidden places of the widow Kelly's, but there he would be, the first man in Glannidan whose

name had ever appeared over a story in a paper, standing against the counter as of old he had stood in "The Daffodils," not now, however, with kindred spirits but with damnable fools who talked continually of cattle and the crops. Then, too, on days when the enmity between his mother and sister and the torture of the child would be too great he would come in here meeting possibly some man who had come to drown his sorrow, some "curse of God annoyance" that had sprung out of his bit of land. They would remain here until the night had fallen thick over Glannidan and until the condition of his mind prevented him from even finding copy for his book. . . His mood would relapse into a conflict between gloom and brightness, between his last thoughts of Kitty and the dream of sometime meeting Ellen again. . . But already had he begun to forget both in reality for the delicacy had fallen from many sides of his mind. . . Very often he would find himself entering into the sullen blasphemy of the men with whom he was after spending the long hours. Then he would fall into one of those conditions of vacancy when all the world would seem to slope away from his feet. . . Sometimes the effect of the drink would help him to doze off, and the life that sloped away from the widow Kelly's would swim far beyond him. He would have a faint notion that people were coming up to the door to have a look at him, the author, begad, the man who was writing stories in the papers about Glannidan! But what about his own story? That was a grand one surely. What a lovely character he was! They loved to read him at this moment with a terrible enmity stirring their minds. He wanted to raise himself beyond them, but, thanks be to God,

his father's love for drink was in him, too, and they depended on that to finish him. Thus had he made his purpose in coming to the widow Kelly's twofold, one side threatening gradually to subjugate the other down into a low byeway of destruction.

He had an awakening one evening as he sat alone in the bar, in a condition of semi-stupor with all his dreams of life and longing going from him. He saw the sergeant of Glannidan, Sergeant O'Donoghue, steal into the bar and slip a bottle of port wine from a shelf for his drunken wife, and put it away beneath his tunic. Then taking another bottle from the shelf he stole over and put it into Martin's pocket who feigned greater stupor so that he might observe the action, but directly the sergeant had left the bar he was as sober as ever he had been. . . He quickly replaced the bottle on the shelf as his mind leapt into a perfect flame. Here was a plot to degrade him utterly from which he had been just barely saved by the grace of God. He had only made slight mention of O'Donoghue's propensities in a little sketch, and he saw very clearly now why this determined attempt had been made to bring him down. What would the others do if only they knew what use he had made of them? Why they would murder him. Now the widow Kelly came back into the bar, followed by the sergeant who called for a pint quite casually.

"Gimme a pint, ma'am," he said, "and good evening, Martin! Good evening, Martin! How are ye, Martin?"

"Good evening, O'Donoghue," replied Martin.

The salutation on both sides displayed an amazing familiarity. O'Donoghue had been accustomed to



have himself addressed as "Sergeant," "Sir," "Your Honour," etc., etc., and this sudden "O'Donoghue" of Martin was startling. Also it betrayed sobriety. Martin's eyes, too, were upon the bulge beneath his tunic, which was the bottle of port wine he was stealing from the widow Kelly. His own eyes glanced hurriedly at the shelf above his head. The other bottle had been replaced there. Mrs. Kelly waddled out of the bar.

"Damn it!" he said, sidling up to Martin. "I only did it for the cod—your bottle, I mean. I want this for the wife. She's after having a kid and I can't afford delicacies. Of course you won't say a bloody word. What'll you have?"

"Get away, you swine, before I lay hands on you!" . . . Great Christ! Where had he fallen at all? Among drunkards, liars, thieves, adulterers, hypocrites. It seemed as if all their villainy had been concentrated into this attempt to besmirch him. . .

He went on feverishly with the writing of his book. All the little turn of nobility it might have betrayed had suddenly become warped in him. It would be a hideous book now, telling of the ghouliness of that Ireland whose reality was being forced upon him. Through its very bitterness might it become great and upon its greatness should he arise. . . He had thoughts now that did not seem altogether dreams of becoming the great Irish novelist. The Dostoevsky of Ireland, the man for whom his country had waited since William Carleton, and of whom Carleton had written prophetically in his autobiography. Synge, Moore, Joyce, Colum, Stephens, Ervine, Robinson—he thought of the best men of his day who had made his

countrymen characters of fiction and drama. He had read all of them, but somehow he felt that his was a more stark presentation. He fully realised the mistake that all of them had made. They had all attempted to express the Irish peasant through the medium of his talk, in what he said rather than in what he did. In fact, not one of them seemed able to realise what he was capable of doing, for although calling themselves artists they, not so very distantly, resembled porters of an Irish Nationalist newspaper setting down the flamboyant periods of some successful patriot. They seemed to fondly fancy that they had broken away from all conventions, when as a matter of fact they were hedged in by the most tyrannical convention in Ireland. They moved always in their pages within the shadow of the Moloch to whom their books were as children of sacrifice. The language obsession of the Gaelic League was merely a perfect concentrated expression of the same fallacy, for here was an organised attempt to give language an importance greater than the life for which, at the fullest stage of its development, it could never be more than an ornament. The national self-respect had dwindled for the very same reason. It was always the speechifying about it and not the progress that was made which seemed to matter. In this newer Irish literature, too, it was the power of prate which successfully hid the power of the clay. It was a perverse subjugation, and the full reason why it had failed to react upon Irish life towards any good purpose. And so the Russian-Irish realist who would scourge his countrymen into a clear view of themselves had not yet emerged.

There were moments when he almost failed before the might of his task and collapsed into despair. He

never went towards Glannidan now, and those hours of the evening when he rested from writing he spent with Lucy Flynn, but not a word or a thought had she in common with him, and even Kitty had not been blind to the beauties of literature. His book, he knew, would bring him much fame and some money, but it was not likely to bring him any happiness, not now, anyhow, when he had begun to make a second Kitty of Lucy Flynn.

And where was Ellen? Ellen would understand the present splendour of his mind; Ellen who had fanned his mind during the queer days of "The Daffodils" and the Tower. And so he was amazed to think that, even with this tremendous return of power and beauty to his mind, Ellen had slipped still further out of his affectionate recollection. With the coming of spring his book was approaching completion. But the land, too, was calling, and the ancient impulses of the clay had returned to him so strongly that he could not resist. It was on their cattle that the curse in their case had turned, and so they had the horses still.

In the days before he had taken again to the land they seemed to be inviting him continually with their big, soft eyes. So now he was out and ploughing daily. He was throwing his whole strength into an attempt to bring back to the little holding that look of glad prosperity he had put upon it after the death of his father. Yet curiously enough this caused a new annoyance to his mother. She had considered his literary effort an attempt to emulate such successful young men as Austin Fagan and Brian Doyle, and it pleased the turn of vanity in her which had been sadly disappointed by Brigid.

"I suppose the writing didn't turn out much of a

success, Martin?" she said to him one evening as he came in with a dejected attitude from the ploughing. He did not answer. He was doing this for love of them, even as he had done many a thing for his mother and Brigid and little Austineen, and yet they were unable to see it. . . The extraordinary vanity of his mother had survived her afflictions. He saw daily how Brigid had overreached her ambition and was sitting there very quietly amid the ruins of her beauty. The helplessness of little Austineen seemed to symbolise the helplessness of all three.

Often as he worked now in the tillage field old Henry Flynn would come over to the mearing wall and look out at him in curiosity not unmixed with a certain crude admiration. Damn it! wasn't Martin Duignan working well, begad, after all the time he had wasted in the bloody cities. He was mending to a degree most extraordinary to imagine. He did not put forward any objections to Lucy keeping company with him now since he was after giving up going into Glannidan in the daytime. And Lucy was proud now with a noble pride. She had plucked her man from his idleness, and surely that was a great thing to have done.

They were to be married in the following harvest. It seemed that even in this he had bowed obediently to all the things that life had wished to do with him from the beginning. In queer, lucid moments of his curious morality he felt it was something he must do in atonement for his connection with Kitty. . . Yet it was the thought of Ellen that would seem to hold his mind always from the perfect resignation of one resolve. It would be hard to think of himself settled so quietly here, married to Lucy Flynn, and doing the work of the

two farms, doing all that heavy, animal work which seemed part of his gloomy duty while the tremendous account which had sprung from the immortal part of him would be ringing his name around the world. Arthur Nicholson would not regret the hand he had had in it. There would be a stirring of admiration at the Tower and of envy in "The Daffodils" when they would read it in either of those places. . . Again he could hear them talking of him around the tea table in the great room, and Mr. Leonard Thompson's quiet, queer laugh, as he sat smoking in the biggest armchair, his long legs sprawled between the others and the gas stove. . . "A putrid book," he could hear Phelim O'Brien say in "The Daffodils," while the others showed their enjoyment of this opinion around the greasy tables, a certain young man from the south hitting his knee continually as he endorsed the opinion of his master—"Like nothing so much as a bloody big field, all weeds and thistles and dirt, where a fellow would want to go out with a bloody big scythe and slash around him before the damn thing would be even bearable to walk through."

Ellen might read it and even Kitty. . . Yet his dream seemed suddenly to have been changed by this reality. The book had been accepted by a London firm and would be published in the autumn.

## IX

FAR into the spring was Martin's peace returning to him with sweet additions daily. He had brought the land back to its original beauty, and he had brought himself back to the early beauty of his mind in the great days of Ellen. And it was the clay that had wrought this wonder. It was a queer, great thing for him who in his early days had not got a great deal of schooling to have caught so much of the world into his mind as to be able to write a book about it, a book, too, which, in a way, might prove to be his vindication and help to put him finally in the imagination of those from whom he had sprung as a "damn smart fellow entirely." And in Dublin, too, some of the clever critics might be at their wits' end to know what to write of him.

It was to be in another way the justification of his dead father, too, and the deadly accusation of the one who had brought ruin to his sister. Yet was it a curious kind of revenge. . . He often fancied how people must think he should go up to Austin Fagan and strike him publicly between the two eyes. Perhaps this was what even Brigid herself thought, and her feeling of it the cause of the dark reserve between them even when the eyes of both were held by the laughing spell of the little child. . . Yet, for all the almost insane subtlety which marked it, they would be able to appreciate it in Glanidan for they were all woefully fond of reading the *Ballycullen Gazette*, and, strange as it might seem, it was the crude scurrility of its method that had shown him a definite way of turning his dream into reality.

Suddenly he made a discovery which amazed him. In the long, quiet evenings towards the end of the spring it was his custom to come out to the road gate and lean upon it in a way which led him into curious twists of thought which were different in their turnings from the tortuous, urgent life through which he had passed. He felt the enormously introspective turn of his nature. It was upon himself that all the urging of his mind had turned. He appeared wholly unable to escape from himself even in the whirling disintegration of the present when the thoughts of mankind seemed only to be for blood and war. He was not even thinking of Ireland, yet was he aware that at this very moment men were dedicating illustrious lives to the service of Ireland.

It was a strange thing, too, this love of Ireland. How it gathered up the whole being of a man into its white consuming flame. It had caught up Séan O'Hanlon, and he was part of the warlike urge of the moment for love of Ireland. If he had gone this way with Séan he must ere now have been filled by the beauty of the flame, and be preparing to die for Ireland. There was not much, he often thought, that Ireland had shown him worth dying for, with the possible exception of Ellen. It was queer how he would think of her so insistently in the light of men dying for the Kathleen-ni-Houlihan of Yeats's play. But he had merely filled his life with mud for the purpose of writing a muddy book in which he would show men who had sprung from the same clay as himself, crawling about dark places which were filled with a heavy stench of the soul.

Yet the personal reason would survive past all the

battle of the ideal for its natural place in his consciousness. He was at enmity and must ever be at enmity with those people of the clay, because of the certain turn of genius that had been implanted in him. But there were men of genius among the Irish Volunteers, and yet they thought their lives very little to give for Ireland.

But, continually as he leaned over the road gate, men with this little twist in their minds and with that would go trooping towards Glannidan with heads downcast. There was little thought of Ireland in their thick skulls. As he remained longer and longer thinking here in the evenings he saw less and less of Lucy Flynn, although what was between them had resolved itself into a condition of acceptance so far as the neighbours were concerned. In the certainty she represented she remained the "Ann Whitfield" of his life. Yet were there odd, bright moments in his thought of Ellen when he wondered had the clay caught him finally to its breast. . .

Two remarkable things happened at Easter, 1916—he wrote a letter, which in some undreamt of way he hoped would reach Ellen, and the Easter Rising broke out in Dublin. There came upon him an almost unaccountable madness when he realised that men were dying in Dublin, dying for love of him and all their countrymen. He knew the very men they must be and Séan O'Hanlon would be fighting not far from them. . . . There came upon him a real and bitter regret that he was not there. He went everywhere in these days among the people for whom those men had gone out to lay down their lives, everywhere he went in the hope of hearing one good word of them. But not one. What he heard merely fed his rage.



As was most meet, it was in the forge, the Parliament of Glannidan, that he heard the most bitter things. Said an ancient who used to tell frequent lies of having been out in "'67."

"And would you tell me now, or d'ye know how these damn Sinn Feiners got into Ireland?"

He seemed to think, "ould pathriot" though he was, that they were a savage tribe from the heart of Africa that had somehow remained over from the Exhibition, the time it was in Dublin, in 1907.

The publicans of Glannidan, the men who throve upon this degradation to the depths of ignorance, were the loudest in their denunciation of the rebels.

"D'ye know what I'd do with them?" said Gilbert Cooney, as he stood at his own door striving hard to suck comfort from a week-old *Freeman's Journal*, "I'd bring them out into a field, theirselves and their looting Larkin crowd, and I'd shoot the whole bloody lot. A proper lot of frauds in the pay of the Government, striving for to destroy poor John Dillon and John Redmond and 'the Cause.' Sham Gaelic Leaguers and Government officials, God damn them anyway! Look at the disadvantage this rebellion puts me to now, me not to have the paper, and so not knowing what move the Government be striving to get on us. Well, bad luck to them, anyway, theirselves and their rebellion!"

Then there was the schoolmaster, a man who in his knowledge of the history of rebellions would seem to be a potential rebel. Now he wore a curious, puzzled smile which danced even in his eyes behind his glasses. But immediately he seemed anxious to give out an opinion:

"Foolish! Foolish! All the Irish rebellions from that of Silken Thomas were foolish, but this is the most foolish of all. The poor, unfortunate young fellows to go get up a mere handful and to go attack the British Empire. Well, well, was there ever heard such patent foolishness?"

A little later, Father Clarke coming by reading his office and stopping to talk with a crowd of corner-boys about the rebellion:

"Ah, God help them for their foolishness, the poor, misguided creatures to go help the hated Hun after all the poor nuns he's after murdering in Belgium."

"And there's women in it too, Father," said the widow Kelly coming to her own door, big and important before her parish priest, her hands clasped across her stomach under her apron. "How d'ye pronounce that name, Father? The Countess——?"

"Musha, don't be bothering your head about that name, Mrs. Kelly. I always lift up my eyes in horror whenever I see anything like a socialist name in a paper."

Further on the three young blacksmiths in the forge:

"But will they make anything out of it?"

"You may be damn sure they'll make out of it."

"D'ye think they're bloody idiots, and they Larkin's crowd?"

"O, Jim was the boyo could gull the public."

Not, however, until the close of the week, and when magnified stories of the lootings began to run around Glannidan, did the village appear perfectly naked to Martin. He was passing by a wall where a few old men were sitting up in the sun. They too had heard the stories of the lootings, and their minds were just presently being warmed by them.

"Christ!" dribbled one ancient, his lips lapping soft over his toothless gums, "if a fellow was able only to foot it to Dublin, a suit of clothes, a hat, a pair of boots and bags of drink. Money maybe, too, to be picked up in the streets. . ."

"It's a woeful thing to be crippled like this when one might be doing well."

Then late in the anxious evenings the wise winks from one to another. Martin Duignan was the only man in Glannidan who had expressed sympathy with the rebels, with the thieves and scoundrels. Wasn't it well known that he was one of them when he was in Dublin, and that he'd try the same game on again if he was let, and here in Glannidan, too?

As if in support of this suspicion, Sergeant O'Donoghue always hitched up his belt at Martin's approach or when he stood near him. A certain amount of suspicion had been put upon Martin by his openly expressed sympathies, and so there was little chance of him being believed, even if he felt inclined to tell the true story of the wine now. . . Besides he felt that great days of very congenial work and promotion maybe were approaching for the police. . .

The week passed in a continuous whirl of rumour to the memorable Sunday of the surrender. The intimation of the end of the rebellion had been posted up in the windows of the Post Office and the widow Kelly came out of her pub with her hands clasped across her stomach under her apron, and laughed loud and long. . .

Somehow Martin was enabled to visualise all that had passed in Dublin. It was a blinding torture to him to think that he had not been there. He knew well that Séan O'Hanlon was dead, for that bond of common

thought and hope which holds together the loves and the minds of great friends felt somehow strained in pain. Now appeared to him in the fulness of its destructive aspect his connection with this woman who had passed. It was the thing that had made impossible this beautiful and pure dying. . . Yet he should have been with them and so have made the perfect atonement for all he had done. . . If only he had died for love of Ellen. . . Had they been in Dublin together during these great days she must have added his spirit to the beauty both had always seen in Dublin. But now no comfort came out of the promise of atonement he had made for himself. Lucy did not understand.

"And, musha, what were they fighting for? Weren't they very foolish to be fighting for anyone by themselves?"

And when he had grown cross at her stupidity:

"Isn't it a wonder now, that if you felt so fond of them entirely that you weren't with them and they fighting. Why, if I felt so heart gone upon anything I'd be in it, you might swear."

And then the scene upon the street of Glannidan on the Sunday after the first executions had taken place, a crowd of young fellows tossing pennies and conversing in a jargon which was half Irish idiom, half soldiers' adjectives, more young men playing cards in the shade, and still more young men talking to Sergeant O'Donoghue at the barrack and asking his opinion of the rising:

"Is it to go attack the forces of the Crown in the very middle of the war and Ourselves and the Army protecting you with the great British Navy. I'd say that the man that'd go attack the police at the present

time is no Irishman." This sentiment was duly received with humorous approval by these fine young men, for whom Padraic Pearse and his comrades had gone out to die, as they sidled closer, as if for affectionate protection, to the six peelers of Glannidan. Then there was a hurried consultation between the young men and the police. Evidently an illegal descent was about to be made upon one of the pubs of Glannidan. A contingent of young men began to move rapidly away.

"Don't forget to bring us back a few bottles," said Sergeant O'Donoghue.

"Be hell we won't, you might swear, for you're the heart's blood of a decent fellow!" said the leader of the gang.

This was the conversation and the scene that Martin was forced to hear and witness on this Sunday after the executions in Dublin, and his hatred of this great guiltiness burned so far into his soul that he knew he would be free for evermore from any regrets for the things he had written in his book. And although the rebellion had been fought and lost without him it had summoned his mind to a new decision regarding his life.

## X

HE did not go into Glannidan again, but remained buried in the more deadly life of Glannanea, not even to Mass on Sundays, and this rapidly came to be established as another stain upon his character. The rumour rose that he was after turning over Atheist. From the newspapers of the time he saw that the outlook of men of all kinds upon the rebellion and its causes and effects was being rapidly changed. He did not want to know whether the outlook of Glannidan had changed, for he did not care to spoil his impression of it during Easter Week. That was too splendidly black. He could already feel the disgust with which he would be filled if ever they turned over to Sinn Fein in this place.

Otherwise he knew the contentment of the fields, the hard labour of the long, warm days, and the dreamless untroubled sleep. All those alien desires and appetites he had brought with him from the cities had faded gradually from his mind. Yet was there upon him some immense pre-occupation that no one guessed; none save himself knew how fiercely his mind burned. Great opportunities seemed to have arisen, and the part of him that Ellen O'Connor and Séan O'Hanlon and Arthur Nicholson had seen had been re-born to meet them again. Séan O'Hanlon was dead. He had been killed, not fighting, the papers reported but by looters as he was making his way home from seeing his beloved. It seemed strange to Martin as he read the account that even Séan should have any

love other than Kathleen-ni-Houlihan. News of Ellen came to him with less of the embellishments of romance, the letter he had written returned with a note saying that the writer's friend, poor Ellen, despairing of finding him in America and thinking surely that he must have returned and been killed in the destruction of the great war, had entered a convent. "Isn't it queer now how things turn out?" the writer had written near the end of the letter. . . . And this thought of Ellen had recently grown so real and definite in the pride of what he had done. . . .

In the ache of his loss he read *Evelyn Innes*, to bring him comfort in his imagination of Ellen in a convent, but George Moore was a weak reed to lean upon in such a case. His book seemed an attempt to describe what he himself might have been like, had sex and inclination permitted his entrance to a nunnery. But the psychology was too obscure, and Martin threw it aside in disgust. To read an analysis of the spiritual struggle which might bring a girl out of a convent would be more to his mind.

He saw to the fullest how now, in this ending of Ellen, all that proud life to which he might have allied himself was on the heights beyond him. But his uprise to that glory might still be all the brighter, the full sweep of a star. His life would commingle in effort with clean men in the great times that the dead had made and so in the very bitterness of his satire he saw shining a love for those that were gone. He scarcely dared to fancy how his book might be received, but at any rate he knew that it was sufficiently great to excite men either to praise or anger. The days when he was to break upon the world were coming rapidly nearer.

A thing of remarkable importance to the affairs of the family now happened. Jamesey Cassels, finding no comfort even in his native Mucklin, had run into the army, and now the news came that he had been killed in action in France. Mary Duignan and Brigid were very glad that he was gone, and sure the child was not his child either. . .

Almost immediately the mother's ambition for the daughter began to re-appear. Brigid was still a fine slip of a lassie, even although she had had a kind of a misfortune. Many a man might like to marry her still, a sort of a stranger maybe who would take her for a decent widow woman with an only son. Thus it was, and very quickly, too, that the ancient enmity between Martin and herself began to spring up again. She sent away to Dublin for patterns and selected a fine dress for Brigid, which she got made with Mrs. Doolan over in Ballyowen, where also Lucy Flynn was getting her wedding dress made for her marriage with Martin. Neither side spoke much of their intentions, but he felt that his marriage must precipitate a quarrel which might come to be very serious in its results. But there remained one way of escape.

Then the day of publication came, and a few days later a cheque from the publishers. He had been stacking the oats in the haggard all the morning, and there was no thought in his mind of this letter or of London, for he had made up his mind in anticipation. That evening he would be finished with the clay. . . He went into the house and began to clean himself for the journey. Little Austineen kept playing continually about his legs as he went on with his shaving. This other life appeared somehow across the path of



his purpose. He had a momentary concern for the future of this little child. There was something subtly revengeful in the thought that he might devote some of the money he would get for his book to this purpose. He called Brigid into the room and told her, and she in turn went out and told her mother, and there was jubilation between them in the kitchen. It must be that he was not going to marry Lucy Flynn after all. . . . Brigid threw on her shawl and went running across the fields to Mrs. Doolan. It was there she would tell the story, so that it might get a good start.

As he went on with his preparations he began to be pained by the thought of his parting with Lucy. It seemed such a treacherous thing to do and she getting her wedding dress made with Mrs. Doolan of Ballyowen. . . . But now he was ready, and as yet he had not told them a word. . . . His intention had formed itself so quietly, so deliberately, that each succeeding action seemed to pass insensibly into it.

"I'm going now, mother."

"Indeed then I'm glad to hear it. Sure you were at home here long enough. Sure you'll be more contented away in some place where you'll be always at the books and the writings, and with Jamesey Cassels dead you'll see Brigid making a fine match yet, and that's as sure as you're there."

"Where is she?"

"She went running over to the dressmaker, to Mrs. Doolan. She'd be right glad to hear that you're going. But the little lad'll say good-bye for her. Say good-bye to your uncle, Austineen!"

As Martin looked into the eyes of the little child a prayer flashed through his mind that his little nephew

should never have to pass through the hell that he had known, and he would do his best for him in the days to be. . . But he knew better now than to turn any mind away from the clay in imitation of the way that his had been turned.

As he went from the house after this quiet farewell, he sighed with satisfaction as he looked at the haggard so rich and trim in the October twilight. It seemed to represent the reality he stood for beyond his dream. What he had done here was an earnest sufficient, before the eyes of all the people, of the greater fields to which he might attain and which he might adorn through the power that was in him.

"It was a queer world, surely."

This phrase from the Tower plays came hurrying into his mind. As he went down the boreen, his bag in his hand, on his way to catch the evening train from Ballycullen, the mist upon the bog seemed folded in great impenetrable volumes like books on mysticism. . . . He met Lucy about the same place that he had met her on that other morning so long ago. She was excited, panting, for she had just come from the dress-maker's where Brigid had let fall the news that Martin was preparing himself to leave the house, that he was leaving altogether, and that he was going to do for little Austineen. . . .

The news coming from his own lips stunned her somewhat. Leaving without her, was it, and going away from the farm where his work had just been so grand and promising, and now when she thought that their marriage and the union of the two farms were only a matter of days. Old Henry Flynn was anxious now that he saw Martin to be not such an

idiot as they had supposed, and he could live at their house if he did not care to bring her in over his mother and sister. . . But beyond all, after all the years she had waited, it was hard to think of her dream being thus so quietly desolated. . . He did not seem to have a thought of the great cruelty of his words. . .

"Oh, God!" she said, "after all my long, weary waiting." Then he went on to talk of differences of taste and all the chasm of separation that the accident of his genius cut. Hitherto he had merely used the term personality to distinguish himself. It was not altogether a question of their farms or their lives, but of something that, although bursting out from him, was at the same time moving and leaping far beyond him. He could not help it, he said. But she could not see it in this light. She was merely blind impulse now. She clung to him.

"Oh, have I not pleased you, Martin; have I not given you all the sweetness I could? Why do you want to spit on me like this. Oh, musha, why? After all the years I have waited for you they will say that poor Lucy Flynn was not able to keep her man after all. And they'll laugh at me and tell the story for ever of me having my wedding dress made and all. Oh, Martin, why don't you take me over to the cliff of the quarry and smash me down against the sharp rocks?"

He could feel her a mass of burning passion rapidly becoming limp in his arms. . . He felt for her and for himself in the sudden recollection how it was only natural that a struggle in agony should have occurred somewhere seeing that he had attempted to do an unnatural thing by severing finally the bond which tied him to the clay. . . He saw this very clearly in its aspect of inevitability, in its literary aspect, and,

further, he thought of a certain heresy which had always been current in "The Daffodils" that there was no passion in peasant Ireland, and hence the Tower plays were bad literature. . . It was surprising that his mind should attain to such complete detachment in this moment. . . He comforted her as best he could, although there was upon him a queer pitilessness which seemed to tell that his very action was but make believe and that all life was but the dream of a dream. . . He had clear remembrance, too, of this which was the theme of the play he thought had been stolen from him in America. . .

He began to speak of meetings in Dublin, and she grew quiet when, as he supposed, she began to picture meeting him when he was a great man with a grand house and a lovely high-up wife. . . It was curious to imagine her, a pious Irish peasant girl, who had never before had wild notions, thinking these things. But as he bent to kiss her for the last time he thought he heard her mind whispering to itself:

"Too old, too old! He thinks I'd never have a child for him, because I'm too withered with hard work, but sure it was for him I worked and waited. And now, after all my loving, he's leaving me here to be lonely."

As he looked far into her eyes he saw queer, unhappy lights dancing and glinting, but there grew upon him finally only an immense feeling of shame, and he knew that this was the end and the end. . .

It was not what he was leaving, but what he was going towards which held his mind as he went out of Ballycullen and on through the dark night to Dublin. . . . It seemed very bright and joyous in the streets and he knew, as he went down from Broadstone, that

the curve of his life should never again return to the clay. Henceforth his life must be phrased in bronze. . . . It was very bright in Grafton Street. . . . There were lights which showed the windows of the bookshops. He looked there and saw his own book and his own name burning before his eyes. . . . For the first time in this place there was something which kept him from gazing upon the soft-eyed women in unquiet thought. He had snatched himself from many a byeway of destruction, and there was a surge of power in his heart which was good to feel here in this lamp-lit street. . . . There was a look of lovely wonder on the face of Dublin as of old it had worn in the days of Ellen. . . .

Phelim O'Brien came towards him floating mistily like a figure out of a picture by "Æ."

"Hello!" he said, "the new man, one of my discoveries, of course. Your book is the greatest Irish novel."

When the congratulations had subsided they drifted on towards "The Daffodils." All the unknown authors of Dublin were assembled there around their stout. They stood up to shake hands, and for the first time in their intercourse he saw that their attitude was marked by sincerity. Even Gillachrist McBrady stood up to congratulate him, although the book was written in English and published in London.

"The new man! The new man!" they said very solemnly as if each had a right to some of the fame that was about to descend upon him.

Martin felt that surely he must have done a great thing with his life as Phelim O'Brien went up to the bar and called for the drinks.

THE END.



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